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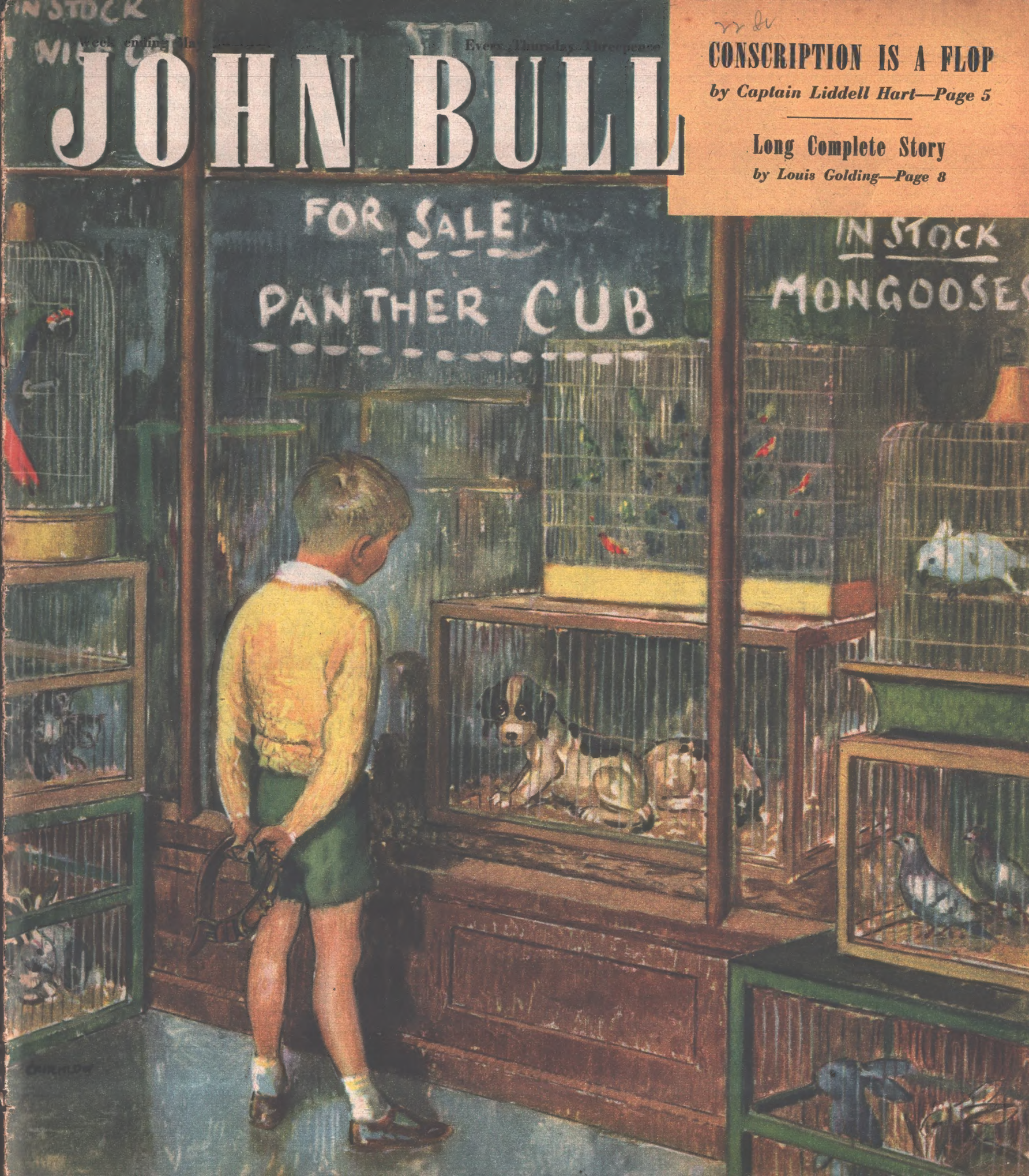
JOHN BULL

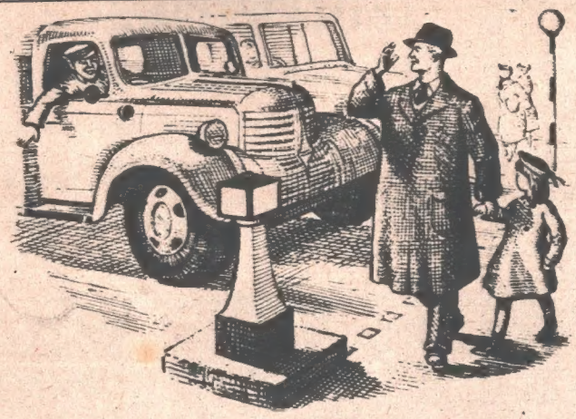
CONSCRIPTION IS A FLOP

by Captain Liddell Hart—Page 5

Long Complete Story

by Louis Golding—Page 8





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MAY 29, 1948 VOLUME 83 NUMBER 2187

Watch the Larder

HOW LOUDLY DOES A MAN have to shout before other people, about to fall over a precipice, hear him and heed him and stop?

The world's statesmen seem very hard of hearing these days. They paid little attention to Sir John Boyd Orr when, as Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, he told them that peace and prosperity depend mainly on growing enough food for everybody and distributing it according to need.

Now Orr has left F.A.O., but his torch is carried on by Viscount Bruce, chairman of the World Food Council. Bruce explains that it is no longer enough to get back to growing as much food as we did before the war.

The world's population keeps increasing by from twenty to twenty-five millions a year, and therefore we have continually to grow more food.

The other side of this picture is that, in the past, the nations were fed largely by robbing the soil of the ancient fertility bequeathed by Nature over thousands of years.

We were, in fact, mining food rather than growing it. And every mine is worked out in time.

So, if we go on as we are, there is at once more food wanted but less coming. Anyone, however thoughtless, can see what that could mean in hunger and misery within a human lifetime.

The remedy is clear—to attack and conquer, on a world-wide scale, the technical problems of growing more food without further exhausting the soil. It can be done and it must be done. All political disputes and economic rivalries pale into insignificance compared with the menace of hunger.

Every politician and every voter should keep his eyes on the larder.

Great Day

AN HISTORIC DOCUMENT will arrive in your letter box this week or next—the Government's "family guide" to the National Insurance Scheme, which starts on July 5.

This marks the greatest single advance in fifty years of attack on man's primal curse of poverty. The dominant aim is to remove the fear of destitution which hangs over a family without capital—fear lest, through injury, sickness, death or unemployment of the wage earner, the income may dry up and the lives of all be ruined.

Of course, we already have doles, pensions, grants and institutions. But the new, all-embracing scheme of National Insurance is designed to be far more generous and comprehensive and to eliminate entirely the humiliation felt by those who have previously had to seek—almost to beg—assistance in unexpected misfortune.

July 5 will be a great day for Lord Beveridge, whose famous report on Social Security was, in spite of many modifications, the blueprint for the Scheme which is now law.

The Beveridge Report was welcomed by a nation still fighting for life and liberty as part of the bright promise of a better future once Hitlerism was slain. Many of our hopes have been blighted; but not this one.

Family allowances and increased old age pensions are already being paid. The National Health Service, a great and important part of the National Insurance Scheme, has survived the struggle between the doctors and the Minister of Health.

All seems set for July 5. Then, on a self-respecting contributory basis, every British citizen becomes entitled in case of need to a great body of benefits and services equalled nowhere else in the world—except perhaps in New Zealand.

Study the official guide to the Scheme carefully. Don't miss the blessings of National Insurance through ignorance. You are paying for it and you should get your money's worth.

Threat to Town-Planning

IT IS TIME WE TOOK STOCK of the new towns.

Building has started at the future mining community of Peterlee in the north-east.

At Stevenage they have got as far as putting up prefabs for some of the workers who are going to build the new town.

And this week, Welwyn Garden City, hitherto owned and run by a company, has been taken over by its Development Corporation under the New Towns Act on the instructions of Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning.

Elsewhere there is still nothing to report. Progress has been delayed by circumstances completely outside the control of the town planners. We cannot and will not blame them for that.

It is not their fault that shortage of materials has restricted the building programme so that full-blown new towns cannot rapidly be erected.

But meanwhile a menace to the whole new-towns scheme and its aims has arisen.

The London County Council, among other powerful local authorities, is going ahead with housing estates in what were intended to be green belts.

This means that, after all, London goes on sprawling.

We therefore ask Mr. Silkin: Does town and country planning really mean business? Is it going to stop the uncontrolled growth of old cities and towns, spreading their congestion and confusion over the surrounding countryside? Or is it merely something to be put aside by the L.C.C., the War Office or any other public institution in search of a quick solution to its immediate difficulties? The answers are important to our future.

Holiday Hangover

ALL IS NOT WELL in holiday land at the beginning of a new season. Easter hinted at this. Whitsun emphasized it.

Although they should know that it is bad business in the long run, the holiday caterers are pushing prices up, not down. Far too many of them have used the new Catering Wages Act simply as an excuse to add ten per cent to their prices.

So hotel and boarding-house bookings are lagging. Soon—perhaps this summer, most certainly next—these places will be fighting for business, and the people who are being exploited now will remember.

This, then, we say, should be the time for giving the public a square deal. Hotel, boarding house, café, fun fair, amusement prices should come down—at once.

Now, before the real rush starts, the men and women running our holidays should begin seriously to think how they can give better value. The square-dealing ones—and there are many—should be finding ways to stop the rackets of the others.

Choke-shrink . . . Mike isn't practising ju-jitsu. Once his shirt was a fit. Now it's so shrunk-up he has to battle for every breath!

Hope-shrink . . . Bob isn't trying to cool off. He bought his shirt oversize to allow for shrinkage—he's hoping to shrink it to fit!

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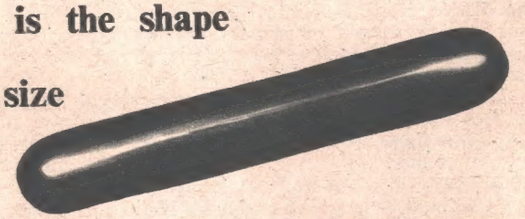

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but it's the test of taste that matters. So smooth and rich is the chocolate, so crisp and good is the biscuit inside. And you get 20 or more in a quarter pound! Your grocer may not always have them, but when he can supply you, how delightfully you will be rewarded for asking.

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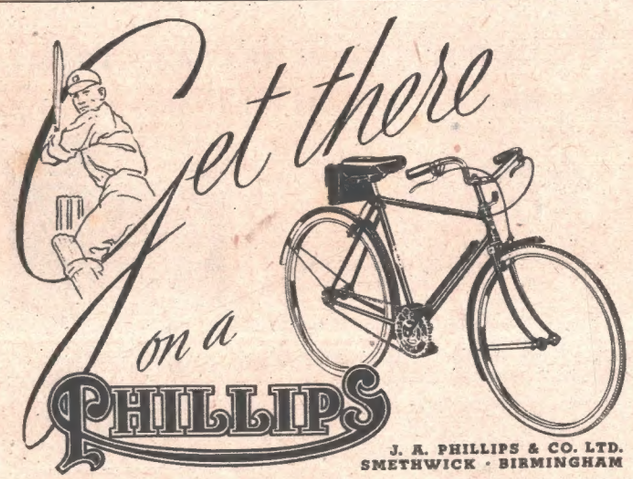

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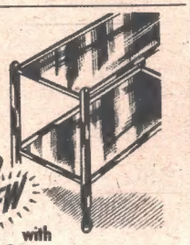

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CONSCRIPTION IS A FLOP

says Captain Liddell Hart

It's costly, it's cumbersome, and, if war did come, the conscript system would not meet our need: a trained force ready for immediate deployment on the European battle line

THE BRITISH ARMY today numbers 534,000—in British troops alone. That means half a million men taken out of our undermanned industries, when we are fighting a critical battle for economic survival. Yet we are not getting anything like equivalent value as military insurance for our defence. That makes the rub worse.

The Army is three times as large as it was on the eve of war in 1939. And we are spending nearly four times as much on it. Even if it is reduced to 339,000 a year hence, as intended, it will still be nearly double the size of the prewar Army.

Yet in real strength to meet an emergency it is much smaller—as measured in fighting formations.

In 1939 we had ten Regular divisions, three of them armoured—as well as four in India. But now we have only a fraction of that operational strength. According to speakers on both sides of the House in the recent Parliamentary debates—and they were not contradicted—we have at present only two infantry divisions and one armoured brigade.

Such a come-down is not explained merely by the run-down after a war. We have never before kept anything like so many men in uniform after a war, nor spent so much on the Army.

Even on the eve of war, in 1939, the Army Estimates totalled only £80,000,000. During most of the years between the wars they averaged barely £40,000,000. This year the Army will be costing us £305,000,000. Never was so much spent on so many for so little—in effective force.

Like a boomerang

What is the cause of this paradoxical and depressing situation? The main one can be expressed in one word—Conscription. Never has any imagined effort to strengthen the Army proved such a boomerang—crippling its capacity and readiness for action. "National Service" has proved a national disservice.

How did conscription come to be accepted as a postwar policy—and why? Like "Topsy," in the story, it "just growed." By the time the war ended it had grown so familiar that there was little disposition to ask, before continuing on that line: "Is our journey really necessary?"

When it was adopted, and fastened on us, by Chamberlain in the post-Prague panic of April, 1939—as part of his sudden turn about, following the failure of his appeasement policy—his precipitate step was opposed by Attlee, who shrewdly pointed out its drawbacks. The introduction of conscription then was not even welcomed by the military chiefs, who feared that it would upset and delay the Army's existing plan of preparation—as it did.

But after eight years it had become a habit. That became clear last year—*before* the National Service Bill was passed—when a Gallup Survey showed that two-thirds of our people considered that conscription was "necessary."

Obviously, the public did not know the technical arguments for and against it, and they could not tell how it would work out in the military sense. They simply had an instinct, sound in itself, of wanting the country to remain strong enough to meet postwar needs and risks. Their attitude was a remarkable tribute to their continued willingness to make sacrifices for what they believed necessary.

But it was not a proof of the necessity. It was merely the continuing momentum of a habit of thought developed during the years when the nation's whole effort was geared to the war-effort. The public had no means of knowing that the conscriptive system would produce such poor results, in our circumstances, as it has.

Habit governed the Government, too. It was not easy to reconstruct an adequate Regular Army. To continue conscription as a fill-up was the obvious and almost inevitable line—all the more so since a majority of the public was ready to back it.

The generals naturally favoured it—at the time. Just as shoemakers feel that "there is nothing like leather," generals feel that military training is good for everybody. Moreover, they would not be human if they did not appreciate that conscription spells more jobs for generals—since it means a larger size of Army than can ever be possible with voluntary service. (That most of the generals have now come to realize, and admit it, that conscription is working out badly for the Army's efficiency is testimony to their capacity to put the interests of the country before their own.)

In November, 1946, the Government made known its intention to introduce peacetime conscription, and in March, 1947, the National Service Bill was presented to Parliament. It provided that from January, 1949—when the temporary postwar arrangement ended—all young men between eighteen and twenty-six would be liable to compulsory military service.

They were to do eighteen months' whole-time service, followed by five and a half years in the Reserve, during which they would have to do sixty days' training in all. It was estimated that just over 200,000 men a year would be available for call-up. On April 1, the Bill passed its second reading. But it did not go through as easily as was expected.

In fact, a large section of the Labour Party defied the Government whip—eighty-five M.P.s, including the Liberals, voted for an amendment to reject the Bill, while many more abstained from supporting it.

Three days later, the Government amended its own Bill by reducing the period of service from eighteen months to twelve.

With this decision it became obvious that the system of conscription would contribute very little to the effective strength of our overseas forces, while still requiring a large proportion of the Regulars to be employed in training the conscripts—and thus subtracting heavily on balance from our effective strength overseas.

Little use in emergency

There would not be time to send the conscript farther afield than Germany and the nearer Mediterranean garrisons—if his period of service was to be something more useful than a long sea-cruise at the public's expense. Moreover, until he was approaching the end of his year's training he would be an element of weakness in any unit to which he was posted.

So the quality as well as the quantity of our forces to meet an emergency was bound to be reduced by this system.

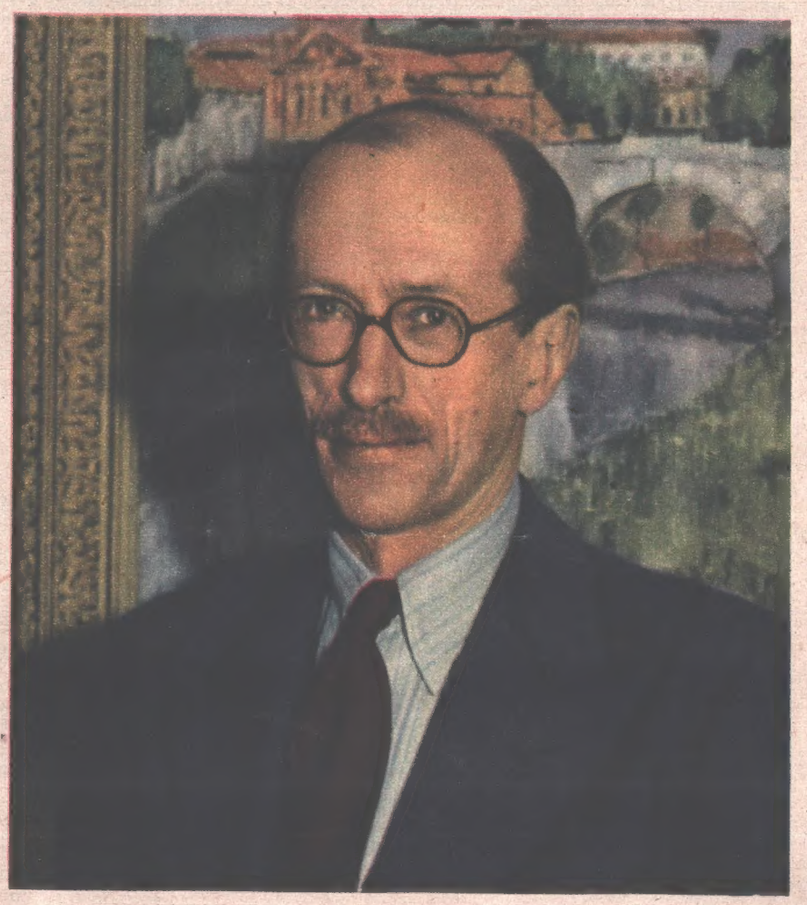
After the decision on the reduction of service. A. V. Alexander, the Minister of Defence, said: "The essential purpose of the Bill is to create a body of trained reserves who will stand ready to take their part in an emergency without requiring the lengthy training which the auxiliary forces needed in 1914 and in 1939."

Here he did not appear to take account of the way that changes in technique may soon make a reservist out of date, and of little use in emergency until he has a somewhat lengthy period of refresher training. Moreover, a small part only of the active Army are gunners, whereas the larger part of the Territorial Army is to consist of this arm—so that many of the reservists who go to it will have to learn a new technique, and in emergency would still need a lengthy spell of training before they were truly "ready."

But the greatest defect of this argument for conscription is that it "puts the cart before the horse." It does not recognize the probable opening conditions of another war—and the system is very badly designed to meet them.

The frontier of the West is now "on the Elbe"—and we are part of the West. To be more precise, the frontier runs from the western end of the Baltic, through the middle of Germany and Austria, to the Adriatic near Trieste.

East of that dividing line stand Russian forces far larger than those which exist in the West. The great danger, in case of war, is that the whole of Western Europe as far as the English Channel would be swamped by an armed flood of Russians long before America could do anything effective to dam the flood. American military experts have talked of the Russians reaching the Channel coast within forty-eight hours. I think they overestimate the Russians' capacity to



Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, author of *The Other Side of the Hill* and many other books on military strategy, wrote this article specially for John Bull

move fast, and underestimate the problems of supply. But it might be a matter of only a few weeks—unless the available forces in the West were a lot stronger than they have been.

America—with her atom bombs, her long-range missiles, and her immense industrial resources — might eventually prevail in the struggle. But another ultimate "liberation," after prolonged occupation and devastation, would be fatal to the countries of Western Europe. Such a struggle would also be likely to bring about the ruin of this country.

It is now truer than ever that "prevention is better than cure." In these conditions five divisions that are ready for action are worth fifty that might eventually be mobilized from reservists. Indeed, on a broad view, those that are late in being ready are really worthless—in saving the West from ruin. If we base our insurance policy on mobilizing a mass of conscript reservists, our Government will "miss the bus" more fatally than Chamberlain's did in 1940.

Lessons of the past

A. V. Alexander might remember that it was Alexander the Great who gave the first striking demonstration that fifty thousand troops highly trained and armed could beat a million who were of lower quality and slower in action.

"Fools say they learn by experience. Wise men profit by other people's experience." The caustic dictum has a close bearing on military problems in general and our own in particular.

We do not seem to learn either by our own or other people's experience. In the first World War it was British brains which invented the tank, and after that war the British Army led the world in developing the bigger idea of armoured warfare. But we had too little faith in our own idea, leaving the Germans to profit by our experience and apply it at our expense in the next war. In 1940 they reaped victory from it while we reaped disaster.

After the second World War, what are we doing? We have taken over a foreign idea that is very back-dated and which proved of no avail in securing the security of our Continental allies in that war. We have adopted the system of peacetime conscription and tried to mix it with our own old professional system.

The mixture that we are now swallowing so naïvely not only contributed to the collapse of France in 1940 but hindered her from forestalling the danger before the war. When the Germans re-entered the Rhineland in 1936, France could easily have checked them if she had possessed a moderate-sized Regular force that could have moved in at once. But her policy was paralysed at that critical moment because she could not act until she had called up her conscript reservists.

When war came the weakness of the mixture was more fatally shown. The bulk of the French Army was composed of men who had never been adequately trained and who had naturally deteriorated since they had been on the reserve. In 1940, the picked German panzer forces struck at a sector of the front mainly held by divisions of this inferior quality, which speedily collapsed—and brought the whole structure tumbling down with them.

France had 5,000,000 trained reservists —ten times as many as our National Service Bill hopes to produce. Yet the issue of this campaign and the West was really decided by a mere ten German armoured divisions, comprising only about 150,000 men but delivering a thrust of 2,500 tanks.

So we are brought back to the question of how to make the *most* of our first-line strength—to meet an emergency immediately it arises.

It is only too clear that our present mixed system gets the *least* out of our nominal strength.

In 1939 the strength of the Regular Army was 234,000. A year ago, when its reconstruction had barely got under way, its strength was 129,000—that is, men who had enlisted as volunteers. A further 41,000 Regulars have been recruited since then. But a very large proportion are "out of action," because they are occupied directly or indirectly in training and looking after the conscript levies.

It's a bad balance

It was estimated last year that somewhere about 100,000 trained men were absorbed in such relatively "non-effective" duties—almost as many as the year's intake of conscripts for training. The conscripts leave the service so soon after they are trained; and have so little time to attain anything like a professional standard of efficiency, that it is a bad balance. But it is twice as bad as it appears at first sight, since the conscript has had to spend six months in basic training before he takes his place in a unit.

Before the war, less than 2,500 Regulars were absorbed in training the Territorial Army and Supplementary Reserve. Beyond this about 15,000 Regulars were themselves in process of going through their own basic training before joining their units. The total training machine, of trainer and trainees, was only about 20,000.

That was a very small subtraction from the total, and meant that over 200,000 were always "effective" in the real sense of the term. It was far more economic, militarily and financially, than the present system.

Bid at improvement

In a laudable effort to improve the system—so far as it can be—the process of training is being reorganized and a partial reduction made in the huge training establishments. Hitherto, the young man who was called up went first through a lengthy course at a Primary Training Centre, and then through another course at a Corps Training Centre—for his particular arm of the Service—before he joined an active unit.

Now he will go straight from civil life to a Basic Training Unit of the arm in which he is going to serve. After about ten weeks there, he will join an active unit and continue his basic training in it.

To illustrate the process let us take the case of a man who is posted to an armoured regiment. He will go there with a batch of his fellows large enough to form a squadron—and this will "move up" to successively higher stages of training. In the first stage, its numbers will complete their individual training; in the second, their corps training; in their third they will do their collective training as a squadron.

The system has various benefits, but it means that each squadron (or similar sub-unit) will be on a different level of training, and that the regiment will not be fit to operate as a complete unit. Nor can it practise in operating with other units as part of a brigade and division—the essential higher form of *collective* training. In other words the system will result in an army composed more of training units than operational units.

Moreover, our higher commanders and staffs cannot be properly trained under such a system. For war games and signal exercises are not an adequate substitute for frequent practice in handling large forces in field exercises.

There are other drawbacks. In order to give the young conscripts as much training as possible during their relatively short period of service, the Regular soldiers will have to undertake the main share of the fatigues and routine duties in the unit, to the detriment of their own training and keenness.

At the same time, the system will leave them with the duty of foreign service in the regions more remote from the home country. That will also tend to increase their share of the less pleasant part of soldiering. It is hardly calculated to stimulate recruiting for the Regular Army.

In Emanuel Shinwell, we have as Secretary of State one of the most active and keenly inquisitive Ministers who have presided over the War Office. At his side stands our most famous soldier, Lord Montgomery, who has always laid stress on efficient organization. But anything they can do is hopelessly handicapped by having to work a manpower system that was adopted without sufficient consideration of where it would lead.

When introducing the Army Estimates in March, Shinwell emphasized the need for a highly trained Regular Army, and said: "Our first principle is that we must not impair the quality of the Regular Army." The principle is right, and its importance vital to our security. But it cannot be reconciled in practice with a large infusion of twelve-months' conscripts. The attempt at combination does not make sense.

That becomes clear when we take account of the natural effects of mixing the two systems.

Troops' quality suffers

How can the quality of the Regular Army avoid being impaired when its scope for advanced training, in larger formations, is so much diminished? It should be obvious, too, that the larger the proportion of its officers and n.c.o.s that are occupied in training the conscript element, the more difficult it will be to maintain the quality of the Regular units. Quality also suffers in a bigger sense—from the reduced quantity of Regulars available for immediate action.

As the figures show, the fighting formations of the Army have shrunk to a fraction of the prewar scale—although the Army's nominal strength, and actual cost, is much greater.

In theory, the advantage of conscription is that it provides the largest possible Army at the cheapest cost, and is the easiest system to organize—since no effort is required in recruiting men or improving their conditions of service. But that theory is not working out in our case. We have to maintain the voluntary system alongside a professional long-service Army for guarding our more distant frontiers — unless we are prepared to conscript men for anything from three to five years, regardless of what happens to our home industries.

The attempt to mix the systems has shown that they do not blend, but merely run to waste.

It has produced a much smaller *effective* Army than the pure voluntary system did. It costs a lot more, since the nominal size is larger, while the conscript's basic rate of pay is the same as the Regular's. It causes a heavier drain on industrial manpower. It is not even simpler to organize—its complications in practice are proving an endless worry to the War Office.

The sooner we scrap conscription the better for the efficiency of our security.

But it will call for a lot more effort in making a soldier's career attractive, and that will depend on strong public support for the effort.

NEXT ARTICLE: The Army We Need

Emanuel Shinwell chats to recruit. Conscript system is a drag on War Office planning, says Liddell Hart

JOHN BULL May 29 1948

HOME HELPS FOR ALL

by JOHN K. NEWNHAM

An hour doing the washing or whole days as stand-in for a housewife during a domestic crisis. That's the range of an expanding home help service that all can afford

MRS. DOROTHY KENNARD, of Burgess Hill, Sussex, is the new-type domestic help. She is the answer to the servant problem.

In the old days, maids worked for one family and probably stayed with that family all their lives. A few still do; but they are a vanishing race. Mrs. Kennard works for nobody regularly. She helps a dozen different families, sometimes for only a few days, sometimes for months on end.

The job takes in a multitude of homes; a labourer's today, a bank manager's tomorrow; or maybe the neglected household of an elderly couple who are no longer able to manage for themselves. Some can afford to pay her wages ten times over. Some can't afford a penny. It makes no difference to Mrs. Kennard. She gets her money just the same. The local council takes care of that.

Many of these new-model domestic helps are part time. Others, like Mrs. Kennard, are full time. They spring from an idea that came to the Oxford Women's Voluntary Services about three years ago, when they were looking for a simple method of providing help in the home when illness or domestic trouble puts the housewife out of action.

The problem is serious. Trouble at home is responsible for the loss of thousands of working days in industry. Illness of the wife is one of the main reasons for absenteeism in civil life, just as it was one of the most common causes of soldiers going absent without leave.

Some families have never been able to afford domestic help; others who could pay for the labour cannot find it. For all of them, help in the home becomes at certain times a sheer necessity, not a luxury. The new scheme aims to serve rich and poor alike.

Part of New Health Service

Oxford still leads the way, but the plan has spread to most other parts of the country. Local councils, often working with the W.V.S., at present operate the scheme either on their own initiative or with the assistance of their county councils.

In July the scheme will become part of the new Health Service and compulsory in all districts.

The council employs the workers and is entirely responsible for deciding when and to whom their services shall be given, usually on the recommendation of a doctor.

The helps are paid 2s. an hour, or £4 4s. for a forty-two hour week. The full rate of 2s. an hour, plus 2d. towards insurance, is charged to the householder who is in a position to pay.

If the householder is not in a position to pay the whole amount, the fee is scaled down. In some cases, there is no fee at all.

Dorothy Kennard had just come back from the Holts when I met her. The Holts live quite close, in a two-bedroomed house with nine children, the eldest of whom is thirteen.

The birth of the latest baby was responsible for bringing in Mrs. Kennard. Mrs. Holt had been ordered by the doctor to do nothing for two months before the baby arrived. Mr. Holt had to stay away from work, and lost his job in consequence. The eldest daughter had to stay away from school.

Then, on the doctor's recommendation, Mrs. Kennard came in. She took complete charge of the home. Mr. Holt went back to work. The daughter went back to school.

Did the Shopping, Too

Said Mrs. Holt: "She did wonders. She was here at half-past seven every morning and stayed until four in the afternoon. She did all the cooking, looked after my husband and all the children, did the washing, went out shopping, and kept the house clean. I don't know what we should have done without her."

And, because her case was brought to the notice of the council, Mrs. Holt is to get a new home as well. She will be moving into a larger house very soon.

It was hard work for Mrs. Kennard, but she got some enjoyment out of it. She liked having the children around her. She is a mother herself, with a son of eighteen. Her husband is a sawyer. She has her own home and family to look after as well as her outside work. She packs up lunch for her husband before she sets off on her bicycle at half-past seven every morning. Small, efficient, cheerful, she gets down to work without fuss.

"The jobs are interesting because they are worth while," she says. "I was a sorter at the local laundry. Then, when I looked after a neighbour who was seriously ill, I attracted the attention of Miss Goode, of the W.V.S. She asked me to join this Home Help scheme.

"It seemed to me that I should be doing a far more useful job helping people who were really in need of it than sorting out dirty laundry, so I took it on. It's a job that makes you realize how wonderful ordinary people are, and the terrible struggle it is for them to get along without help. At one place where I worked the old gentleman was ninety-eight and his wife eighty-nine. He was deaf, but otherwise completely fit.

Wife Could Cope No Longer

"When I got to the house, the old man was outside chopping wood, and he always fetched the coal in.

"But looking after the house was becoming too much for his wife. She couldn't do the heavier tasks, so the doctor suggested help. I went along to give a hand for a couple of hours two or three times a week."

When nurses are called in to attend the elderly and ailing, they are not expected to do any housework. The home help does both. Another elderly couple whom Dorothy Kennard helped were both in their eighties. The husband was an invalid, unable to bath or dress himself. His wife did everything for him, but finally had to give up.

Mrs. Kennard's job, when she went there, was not only to help with the house. She got the old man up, washed him, dressed him, put him in a wheel chair and took him for a short walk every morning—the first outings he had had for a very long time. Later in the day, she would come back to put him to bed.

During Mother's Confinement

Predominating in the list of those requiring help are the families in which a birth is taking place. Assistance is given while the mother is away from home and for the first few weeks after her return.

The first time I heard of the scheme was when a friend of mine was expecting her third baby. For months before it arrived, she and her husband hunted frantically for somebody to look after the two children and the large house while she was in the maternity home. They were willing to pay almost anything, but could find nobody.

The worry began to tell on her; and this in turn worried the husband. Then the doctor mentioned the domestic help scheme, they applied to the local council, and their worries were over.

When the wife falls ill from other causes, the provision of domestic help not only has the physical advantage of keeping the home running during a critical period, but it also has the psychological advantage of relieving the wife of anxiety and speeding her recovery.

Many of these younger people can find friends to help when there is trouble in the home, but elderly people are often friendless or unwilling to ask for help from neighbours. The conditions in their homes can be appalling. How some of them manage is beyond comprehension. They fend for themselves in the sheer necessities of eating and dressing, but the rooms themselves fall into a dreadful condition.

In one case, the house had not been cleaned for over a year. This was not discovered until the wife fell ill and a doctor was called in. Within a couple of days the local council had installed a domestic help to set things straight and keep them that way.

Would-be Helpers Are Vetted

This solution of the householder's servant problem is fine for the householder but a headache for the council. The demand for help is greater than the supply, and the council's field of recruitment is even narrower than the householder's. For where the householder in desperate need of help will probably take a risk over an applicant's character, the council dare not.

The Medical Officer of Health must satisfy himself about the woman's cleanliness and health. The council, which will send the helper into other people's houses, must be certain that her character is above suspicion.

If you *are* lucky enough to get one of these domestic helps to see you through a crisis, you can be reasonably sure that you are in good hands.

When the Holts' baby was due, Mrs. Kennard (right) took complete charge of the household.—*John Bull photograph by William Kemp*

★ *John Bull Story Special*

Mr. VINNERY STAYED UPSTAIRS

by Louis Golding

ILLUSTRATED BY K. J. PETTS

Compared with earlier guests, it seemed to the three ladies that such a nice old gentleman as Mr. V. would be no problem at all

He looked at Hazel and his jaw dropped. He muttered a word that was hard to catch

IT WAS IN THE "Ladies Only" carriage from York to London that the three ladies met Mrs. Huxtable and their destiny, and their destiny was a boarding-house in Pimlico.

Nothing was farther from the thoughts of the three ladies than to take over a boarding-house, in Pimlico or anywhere else. Prudence Chimney, the eldest of them, was going to live in a very small flat in Marylebone, on her small income. She didn't know what she was going to do there, but she would at least be near her younger sister, little Hazel, who was going to be companion-secretary to a rich old woman in Bryanston Square. And she would not be too far, either, from Joan Irwin, their cousin, who was going to keep the books for a remote relative, a sports outfitter in Holborn.

All three of them were chilled and frightened by the prospect that stretched before them.

Prudence did not want to live alone, though she was a big woman and could well have looked after herself. Hazel did not want to be anybody's companion-secretary. Joan would have fainted with disgust if anyone should have asked her the price of an athlete's strap. They wanted to be together. They had been together for years and years, looking after old Mr. Chimney, the father of Prudence and Hazel, the uncle of Joan.

But he was dead at last. The house near York had gone. Everything had gone. And the three ladies had to earn a living. And they were on their way to King's Cross to start again, or rather to start for the first time, and somewhat late in life.

There, in the "Ladies Only" carriage, as I have said, they met Mrs. Huxtable. Mrs. Huxtable was a warm and friendly creature, and an energetic one. Although she sat more or less immobile in her seat, she gave you the impression she was rotating on her axis. She had large brown eyes in which you melted. She had a voice that carried you away, like a ball of screwed-up paper in running water.

In twenty-five minutes she found out everything there was to find out about the Misses Chimney and Miss Irwin, their long untroubled past, their troubled immediate future. In forty-five minutes she had sold them the Victoria Crescent Hotel, in Pimlico; for one of the things she had learned was the fact that between them, at a pinch, the ladies could raise twenty-two hundred pounds.

The day was Friday. The deal had to be settled by Saturday noon at the latest, the hour when lawyers close their offices. Mrs. Huxtable was flying to Kenya on Monday, where her daughter was going to have an operation two or three days later. The daughter would never be well again. She would need her darling mother as never before. A tear, large as a cherry, rolled down Mrs. Huxtable's cheek.

The three ladies knew nothing at all about running a boarding-house, nothing. But where is the maiden lady who is not convinced that if she was born with any talent at all it is the talent of running a boarding-house? They had rarely, if ever, stayed in a boarding-house. They did not know where Pimlico was.

But what a heaven-sent opportunity! No cantankerous old lady for little Hazel, who preferred to spend her time looking after her own pretty dresses and exquisite hands. No beastly ledgers and boxing-gloves for Joan. No lonely flat for Prudence. And the three of them could be together, always, as they had been for so long. And they could be so kind and helpful to the guests, a home from home. The guests would be their brothers and sisters. Late at night and first thing in the morning they would come down to the private kitchen and make tea. Not at five o'clock, mark you. That time would be sacred to specially invited guests.

They were dreaming away, chattering away, like a kettle on the hearth. Mrs. Huxtable let them dream. But if a moment came when they looked like emerging from their dream and asking a practical question, Mrs. Huxtable was at them again, the large eyes rolling in their sockets, the urgent voice drumming and throbbing away.

That night, Mrs. Huxtable invited the three ladies to dinner. She was charming. She had breakfast with them. By nine thirty she had taken them to Pimlico to see the hotel. She would not want them,

she explained, to buy a pig in a poke. It was a fair-sized place, and all the other houses in the Crescent were hotels or boarding-houses. The rooms were a bit on the shabby side, but what fun it would be finding bits and pieces and brightening things up! The place was full for, after all, it was wartime. There were several young Service people about, with their wives.

By ten thirty the four of them were at Mrs. Huxtable's lawyer. By eleven forty-five, a few telephone calls having been made, the deal was done, the documents signed. The three ladies had taken legal possession of the Victoria Crescent Hotel. On Monday morning, by ten o'clock, they were formally installed.

It should be said at once, Mrs. Huxtable was not a swindler. Whether the daughter and the operation and Kenya had anything to do with it or not, she wanted quick results and when Heaven put the three ladies in her lap she pounced. The hotel was worth the money, though the three ladies saw on the Monday that there would be much more to do brightening the place up than they had realized on their first cursory visit.

Some of the guests were a little puzzling, too. Were not some of these Service-folk awfully young to be married? But it was wartime, after all, and that is a time when young people do not wait. And weren't one or two of the wives . . . how would you call it? . . . just a little highly coloured? Perhaps, yes. But we must learn to be broad-minded, insisted Prudence, the large and confident one. This is London, not York, and it's *wartime*.

A REALLY shocking thing happened that first night. There was a ring at the door quite late, about eleven thirty. (It was Joan's late night. They had already arranged the times between them.) When Joan opened the door an American soldier was standing there, swaying. He was clearly the worse for drink. But that was not all. There was a woman with him, also drunk, and painted up to the eyebrows. Now Joan had a suspicion what this was about.

"What do you want?" she asked shortly. (Inside, her heart was knocking like a hammer.)

"I wanna room for'n hour," said the American soldier. He had one foot in the door.

"Go away," ordered Joan.

"Look!" said the soldier. He took out a thick wad of notes from his pocket. "How much d'you want, honeybunch? All the other places full up. Just one hour."

"Go away or I'll call the police!" said Joan.

"Come on, Yank!" said the soldier's lady friend. "Let's beat it! You old cow!" she said, addressing Joan. Then they went off.

At twelve o'clock, as arranged, Joan went up to her bed, where she had a good cry. It was nasty, but it might not happen again, not for a long time. Anyhow, they were all together now, all three of them, Prudence and Hazel and she. They were going to remain together. She smiled through her tears. It would be a hard job, but they were going to make a success of this hotel. There was evidently room for a nice place in Victoria Crescent, run by three ladies. She set her chin and clenched her fist. And so she fell asleep.

The three ladies, it can be seen, were nothing if not respectable. It could be said of them they were innocent, but it could not be said they were stupid. They were thoroughly aware before twenty-four hours had passed that they had taken up their abode in a dubious street in a dubious section of Pimlico. That night, with little Hazel, the episode repeated itself.

This time it was not an American; it

Continued on next page

THE GIRL FROM COOK'S

by Hilde Marchant

A hotel in Istanbul? Best route by bus from Norway to Switzerland? Here's a girl with all the answers —but she prefers Devon

MISS PARKER SAYS she loves the human race. She loves it in all its moods: angry, blustering, humble, happy and even tearful. She needs to—since she meets quite an assorted stream of it at the counter of her travel agency office in the lobby of one of London's largest hotels.

Miss Parker is the first woman to be given the job of managing one of Thomas Cook's branch offices. She is a feminine flying wedge in a hitherto masculine preserve.

And another thing: Miss Parker, whose daily duty is to book plane trips to Paris and train trips to Istanbul, speaks no language but English and has never been abroad.

When Cook's started to open up their headquarters in Berkeley Street after the war, their prewar highly-trained staff of two thousand had dropped to about two hundred. Old servants were due for retirement and the young people had not had much opportunity for foreign travel except under the strictly utilitarian auspices of Movement Control.

The old tradition that anybody joining the firm would speak several languages, have considerable experience of travel, and talk with familiarity about the better-known European resorts, was due for adjustment.

Couldn't Do Without Women

Not because they liked them, but because they could see no way of doing without them, Cook's decided to admit women to a new travel training school set up at the top of the main building. Violet Parker was one of the first four women to step forward. This produced from the older male employees the same sort of superior smirk that went round the Foreign Office when the first woman vice-consul was appointed.

The training course takes in geography, map reading, foreign currencies and foreign railway systems, together with a final test on keeping one's temper. The first four subjects can be taught by instructors and films; the last needs a practical examination.

A small booking office has been set up in one corner of the classroom and to this come two of the oldest inhabitants to put all the most irritating and tedious questions that the awkward traveller can ask. For three-quarters of an hour they have the trainee thumbing through hotel guides, timetables and currency lists, planning trips all over the Continent, and then they say they think they'll stick to Clacton after all.

The smart pupil who at this point sells them two first-class returns to Clacton will pass. The more normal type who breaks down half-way through and yells: "But I've *told* you ten times where to change," will be returned to the bookkeeping department.

Violet, who just wouldn't be provoked, came out high on the list. She was given the job of manageress of the bureau in the hotel lobby.

It is not an easy assignment, for the office is between the hotel reception desk and the lounge. This means that more people ask what time lunch is served, or if the luggage is down yet, than whether there is a vacancy on the sixteen-day tour of Italian art centres.

Nevertheless, Violet regards all approaches from the public as potentially useful and there are occasions when the business man who has stopped to ask where he can leave his hat and coat finds that he has reserved a seat on the next morning's plane to Manchester.

She prefers, however, the protracted struggle to the casual cash sale. There was, for instance, the South African who had come to collect his fiancée in Vienna. Miss Parker booked his air passage several times, but each time his visa to Austria was held up. He came to her desk daily to detail his own anguish and the blockheadedness of officialdom.

Finally, when the visa arrived the plane was full for several days ahead. This last straw almost broke the friendship established over the previous weeks. For two hours she phoned and finally got him a returned ticket. He went off limp and speechless with gratitude.

When he got back, he produced his bride to say thank you and assure Violet that all the trouble had been worth while.

There is another old friend who came into Miss Parker's life some weeks ago. One lunchtime a rather shrunken man in a mackintosh, who looked as if he had been washed white by the winter's rain and sleet, began hovering at the corner of the counter. He picked up a brightly coloured folder with a hectic picture of mimosa and burning sand splashed all over the cover.

Miss Parker began to talk to him in reassuring terms: everything would be quite simple, he was on the top of the list and she would let him know as soon as things cleared up a bit on this travel ban. Weeks ago he booked for ten days on the French Riviera at some cheap, comfortable but sunny spot. Now, once or twice a week, he calls to make sure that everything will be in order for the beginning of July.

On rainy days, he likes to look at the brochure all over again and mellow his dream of sun and wine.

The company does not think it likely that another Violet Parker will be found in this year's crop of trainees. To be put in charge of a Cook's branch office in so short a time is unusual for a man. For a woman it is impossible—always excepting Miss Parker.

So most of the girls whom Cook's are training at the moment are being tried out for counter work. The idea is that there will be an older male colleague at hand in case of confusion. I stood beside one new girl in the main reception desk at the Berkeley Street office.

In a short time she was asked how to get to Norway via Switzerland by bus; how to get a tandem across the Alps; whether there were any vacancies for the Ascot races; and whether she was married. To the last question she answered "no," whereupon for no apparent reason the inquirer gave her a small white elephant and took a taxi to Hampstead.

Help Mothers to Cope

Women will also come into the service this year as travelling hostesses, ready to help mothers to cope with young children on long journeys. They will take parties abroad or receive them in foreign cities. Occasionally a girl from Cook's may be seen shepherding a charabanc party on a sightseeing tour.

Charles Holt, assistant general manager with thirty years' service, will feel a lot happier when the staff training trips abroad are restarted—probably this year. The staff is sent to various centres to get first-hand knowledge of foreign towns, hotels and trains.

"It is essential to know if the character of a certain hotel or town will fit the character of a certain customer," he says. So Violet, whose farthest train trip to date has been to Scotland, may soon find herself seeing some of those foreign places to which she has issued so many tickets.

In the meantime, she plans to spend her holiday this summer in Devon, at a quiet little place not on the Cook's list.

Violet Parker at London hotel desk. Qualifications of first woman to be in charge of bureau: she likes people, never loses temper

THE HUMAN MACHINE . . . by ROFFE THOMPSON

Young Man Who's Made Good

ONE example is worth a hundred sermons, so this week I'm going to tell you the true story of John.

John came out of the R.A.F. after the war determined to do something. He wasted no time. He got a job in the textile industry at £2 a week—35s. of which went on board and lodgings—and learned from the inside how it was done.

In his spare time he took a technical course and compressed three years study into twelve months. At the end of that time he had made up his mind that there was an opening for handwoven tweeds.

He came to London and saw the Board of Trade. His request for an allocation of yarn was refused at first, but John persevered and the Board of Trade relented. He got his yarn.

He went to Keighley to buy a loom. He was promised delivery in two years. John persevered some more and got his loom within three months.

He hunted Scotland for premises and eventually rented for a song some that no one else seemed to want.

He advertised for workers. None of the applicants he chose had any experience of the trade. That didn't worry John.

"All I wanted," he says, "was common sense, a sense of humour and a willingness to work."

Today he has thirty looms operating and some forty workers. You wouldn't believe me if I told you how much money John has made.

It just goes to show what a young man with energy, enthusiasm and determination can do even in these times of restriction.

MR. VINNERY STAYED UPSTAIRS:

Continued from previous page

was a Pole. He did not hold up a wad of notes for bait but a pair of silk stockings. Hazel was, at least to look at, the frailest of the three. She was pretty, with forget-me-not eyes and a gold shimmer in her hair, and hands as dainty as rosebuds. But she sent that Pole packing with something of the asperity of a sergeant-major. The lady friend was reduced to total silence.

"If it happens to me," said Prudence, the grey-haired one, who had rather large feet and who could stand no nonsense, "I'll ring up the police."

It happened to Prudence, and Prudence rang up the police. She gave an account of what had been happening, and asked if there was anything that could be done about it. Her voice boomed quite fiercely down the telephone. The reply was slightly jocular:

"Suppose *you'd* been doin' three months 'ard on Salisbury Plain! 'Ave a 'eart, Madame, 'ave a 'eart!"

It was to be deduced the arm of the law was not likely to bestir itself.

BUT the three ladies had no doubt at all about the sort of hotel they wished to run, and it was astonishing how soon it became that sort of hotel, flanked and faced though it was by hotels of the most tolerant sort. In a week or two the last dubious couples had departed; they could not stand up against eyes so innocent and forthright as the eyes of the three ladies. The moment you rang the bell, and were admitted, an odour unique in Victoria Crescent came to your nostrils, composed of lavender and toasted scones and soap scrubbed into corners.

The months went by. A year or two went by. The war was over now. The front was given a fresh coat of paint, at once demure and cool. There were bright flowers in window-boxes and a striped awning to let down over the front door. You could almost imagine that you were in a side street in York, rather than in the heart of London, no distance from Victoria Station.

But that is, of course, a very convenient location, what with Parliament not far off, and the Abbey, and the School, and various other institutions not so important. The sort of people connected with that sort of institution began to patronize the Victoria Crescent Hotel in increasing numbers. It was not only convenient, it was so warm and cosy, without being in the least lax, a "home from home"—in fact, as the three ladies had wanted it to be from the beginning.

Meeting in the kitchen at night and making your own tea became quite an institution.

THE guests came and went, and recommended the hotel to their friends. Some came and did not go. They became "permanents": not too many of them, for "transients" are more profitable, and the hotel was, after all, not only a home, but a business. But the "permanents" were hand picked, they were from the top drawer. The better public schools, the Church, the county families, were frequently represented in that small, choice company, the paladins of five o'clock tea in the ladies' own sitting-room, amid the gold-framed water colours and the shining brassware.

It was undoubtedly Mr. Vinnery who bestowed on the Victoria Crescent Hotel its steadiest and brightest lustre, though the statement has to be made that on the day of his arrival, the lustre was less bright and steady than it should have been.

Perhaps Mr. Vinnery had a cold, and colds upset people queerly sometimes. Perhaps someone had naughtily slipped a noggin of gin into his ginger-ale at lunch. (He turned up in the middle of the afternoon.) The fact is that on his way upstairs to be shown his room, with Prudence going just ahead of him, he happened to brush up against little Hazel, who was going down.

"I beg your pardon," he said politely, turning his face towards her. Then his jaw dropped, and hung loosely for a moment or two. He stood stock still. Then he started muttering. It was only a single word, like "race," perhaps. Or, maybe, it was "Grace," the name of a woman, or a small girl. Neither Hazel nor Prudence could get it, though they were so close. Then the strangeness went off as quickly as it had appeared. His gait as he followed up after Prudence was quite jaunty. The mild twinkle was in his eye again.

Nothing like that happened again. According to Joan, who had not been there, it had not happened at all. "Grace!" she laughed. "The only Grace the old dear ever knew was something in a pulpit, not a petticoat!"

For Mr. Vinnery was a Nonconformist, and had even been, it was said, a lay preacher. But he *had* been a Cabinet Minister, and that is lustre enough for anybody. He became (if the expression is not offensive) the prize exhibit of the Victoria Crescent Hotel, though the ladies were far too well bred to do anything so vulgar as to exhibit anyone. But he gave its distinctive cachet to the home-from-home, and he was so friendly, in his own quiet way, his eyes glinting amiably behind his spectacles. He read a good deal. He was still interested in missions to the heathen. He was altogether nice and comfortable to have about the place.

And then, May the fifteenth came round. The first May the fifteenth, that is, during the residence of Mr. Vinnery at Victoria Crescent. The three ladies remembered the date partly because that was the date for renewing the insurance, and partly because of Mr. Vinnery himself.

Mr. Vinnery did not come down to breakfast that morning. That was in itself an unusual thing. Mr. Vinnery *always* came down to breakfast, and very punctually, too. He was very punctual about his breakfast-time, and the time he devoted to his constitutional, his letter-writing, his books, his newspaper. He had been just like that with the measures he had introduced as Cabinet Minister.

And Mr. Vinnery was not down for breakfast.

"It's very odd, isn't it?" commented Hazel plaintively to Prudence. Joan was not down yet. It was the morning for Joan's stop-in-bed. The three ladies each in turn allowed themselves a morning stop-in-bed. "It's the first time, isn't it? He's always been down, even Sundays," added Hazel.

"Yes," said Prudence, coming back still once again from the hatch, where she stood supervising operations, like a captain on his bridge. "No one is left down here except Number Eight. Mr. Vinnery can't be coming down. I wonder if he's not well. I'll go up and see."

"No, darling," said Hazel firmly, pursing her pretty lips. "Not with that foot of yours." (There had been an ankle sprained lately on those dark basement stairs.) "I'll go. I'll tell him he must have his breakfast in bed. And he can have a doctor, too. Isn't it lucky Number Eleven is a doctor?"

"A doctor of *philosophy*, my dear," observed Prudence. "All right, Hazel. Go up and see."

So Hazel went up and saw. But before she saw, she heard. She *thought* she heard as she was going along the passage towards Mr. Vinnery's room, but she was not sure. Then, as she stood outside his door, she realized there was no doubt at all. Mr. Vinnery was crying. He was crying as if his heart would break, as if it was already broken. It was less a crying than a low deep moaning, like a dog kicked and abandoned by its master.

Hazel stood with her knuckles an inch from the panel of the door; she stood there from one minute to the next, and still she did not knock. She felt a dampness start on her forehead. Her neck twitched under the ash-blonde hair.

"Don't be an idiot!" Hazel told herself. "The poor old man's got toothache or something. That's the way it takes him. He cries."

She knocked. There was no reply. She knocked again. There was still no reply. The moaning did not cease.

"There's nothing else for it," said Hazel. This time she talked aloud, for after all, this was a *man*, though an old one, whose bedroom she proposed to enter, unbidden. She turned the handle and entered. Mr. Vinnery was in his

Continued on page 18

ISLAND STORY

WHILE WATCHING a free-style wrestling match at Belle Vue, Manchester, I was startled by a thunderous female voice behind me urging on one of the combatants.

"Go on, Chick," she screamed. "Kill him; they can't hang you now."—*A. C. Cook, 5 Farcroft Avenue, Northenden, Manchester.*

★

I WAS JUST HOME FROM Burma. After a week's rail journey across India, three weeks at sea, and a day's trip from Scotland, I boarded a train at Waterloo for the last twenty miles of my journey. It was the rush hour, and in the corridor I was pushed tight against a typical strap-hanger.

Seeing my overseas uniform and hat he asked, "Just back from Burma?"

"Yes," I replied.

In the same matter-of-fact tone he asked, "Been standing all the way?"—*Ex-S.E.A.C., Weybridge, Surrey.* (*Full name and address enclosed.*)

★

OVERHEARD AT THE greengrocer's:

Customer: A pennyworth of parsley, please.

Greengrocer: Twopence!

Customer: I only want a pennyworth.

Greengrocer: That's all you'll get. But it's still twopence!—*Mrs. D. Miller, 38 Hancock Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham, 8.*

★

IN OUR LOCAL one evening recently the conversation was mainly about Russia.

After some time a little old man who had been sitting quietly in the corner said slowly and in all seriousness, "Thee needn't worry about Stalin. It be that fellow Kremlin as makes all the trouble. He needs watching."—*C. H. Cradduck, "Upper Sorrels," Fittleworth, near Pulborough, West Sussex.*

Readers' personal experiences reflecting the times we live in win one guinea on publication. Mark entries "Island Story." Postcards only, please

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM

Wilfred Pickles urges farmer: "Have a go." Sentiment's a big seller

As long as it's lively

by Frank Tilsley

Continuing the John Bull inquiry into What Radio Does to Us, Tilsley tells how listeners react to comedians and variety programmes

"LISTEN TO THE WIRELESS?" echoed the housewife in Peckham. "Of course I do. Every day. What do I like best? Oh, variety and light stuff, you know. Wilfred Pickles. Tommy Handley. Dance music. Something to keep the house cheerful."

Six listeners out of every ten say approximately that. However impressive is the headway made by *Saturday Night Theatre*, symphony concerts, *Country Magazine*, *Progress Report*, *The Brains Trust* and so on, the fact remains that six listeners out of ten—some twenty-one million people—expect their wireless set to entertain them, to "keep the house cheerful."

I had interviewed 117 people before I found anybody who listened to the Third Programme. Sixty-four listened mainly to the Light Programme and forty-one to the Home Service. (Eleven of the 117 had no sets or did not listen regularly to any programme.)

Whichever way I put the questions the result was always approximately the same: six listeners out of ten want to be entertained. "You don't want to bother your head about world affairs after a hard day's work. There's too much about the state of the country on the radio. Let's have a bit of *life*."

But this desire for entertainment—for light entertainment—is active as well as passive. It is not merely the desire for a pleasant background noise, for *Music While You Work* and *Melody Hour* and *Music in the Air*. A great deal of it—about fifty per cent—is highly selective, so that you get a wide divergence of views on similar types of programme.

You find people who can't stand *Merry-Go-Round* and yet enthuse over *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh* — and the other way about, of course. Of twenty-six people who listened regularly to the most recent *Monday Night at Eight* series, sixteen said they liked it mainly because of the Dr. Morelle feature, or the Deliberate Mistake, or Puzzle Corner.

In other words, rather more than half of them liked the programme because they could take an active part in it. This, of course, accounts for the popularity of the quiz programmes—audience participation, as it is technically described. Quite a large number of people told me they liked quiz programmes best of all, and some go to a great deal of trouble to hear all of them. Nearly all these listeners were men.

"No Use to a Busy Woman"

The reason quiz enthusiasts are mainly men seems fairly obvious: "My husband is mad about the quiz programmes. I don't like them much—you've got to settle down to them to really appreciate them, anyway. It's like plays and talks and all the rest of it—they're no use to a busy woman. I've got to be moving about the house all the time."

When women favour variety programmes it is more usually on the grounds of the personality of the comic. Wilfred Pickles is so human, Tommy Handley so pat, Richard Murdoch is "light-hearted," Charlie Chester "high spirited," Kenneth Horne "gentlemanly." The capacity to laugh at yourself appears to be highly rated—Arthur Askey and Vic Oliver were particularly praised for this. Eric Barker seems to have endeared himself to a rather higher social group than the others.

One woman I interviewed, who turned out to be a local magistrate, had a fascinating theory about the popularity of these radio comics: "Listen closely enough, and often enough, and you'll find they've nearly all two main characteristics in common. They nearly all flout authority. They nearly all get flattened by calamities from which they come up smiling. Haven't you noticed?"

I hadn't, but I admitted this seemed to be a pretty fair description of most of the variety programmes.

"You'll notice now," she said, "now I've pointed it out. But just think of the effect it is having on the minds of the listeners! The right of the ordinary man to gibe at authority is one of the things we pride ourselves on—and this right is emphasized every time a comedian cracks his gags into the microphone. Two or three times a night, you might say. The radio comics teach people more about their rights and privileges than all the lectures and textbooks that have ever been published."

And, she went on, the way the comics get flattened out by all sorts of catastrophes, and come up smiling every time. Wasn't that another lesson that we were having rubbed in, in the most palatable form imaginable, night after night? To face difficulties cheerfully, to come up after a crisis full of confidence and smiles. "Cheekily" was the word she used.

Oh, no, she didn't think all this was deliberate, a subtle form of propaganda. It was all part of our character, our heritage of obstinacy and scepticism, our natural capacity to laugh at ourselves. We were being presented, insistently, with the best aspects of our own tradition, the comics were unwittingly stimulating us to the qualities of greatness. . . .

I suppose there must be some people, somewhere, who do believe that the B.B.C. indulges in a subtle form of propaganda by means of the variety programmes, but so far I have failed to meet them. After reading the opinion of somebody in a newspaper that Tommy Handley indulged in Tory propaganda in *Itma*, I asked forty listeners if they agreed or disagreed. With the exception of eight who hadn't thought about it, or never listen to *Itma*, they all said they didn't think there was any propaganda of any sort, though presumably they were people with the usual mixture of political beliefs.

Perhaps our magistrate would find a third characteristic of our radio comics: that they preserve the tradition of tolerance of free speech—free speech at its most barbed and scathing.

Old Music Hall Tradition

Not all the ace variety programmes are built round the personality of a comic or upon the structure of a quiz. I find that two listeners in seven hear *Music Hall* every week; approximately the same number as listen to *Itma*, and almost as many as listen to *Have a Go!*, its greatest rivals for popularity.

Yet *Music Hall* is quite a different type of programme from the others, being simply a collection of different turns in the time-honoured music hall tradition. There is no audience participation and the most popular artists do not reappear more than three or four times in a year.

Setting out to unearth the secret of the popularity of *Music Hall*, I made one or two curious discoveries. In the first place I was surprised how few people said they liked the show. Most listeners criticized its excessive sentiment: "Laid on with a trowel . . . corny . . . old fashioned . . . plastered over with slush. . . ." Then a middle-aged couple from Manchester put me on the right track. The woman said she liked it.

"It takes me back to when we were courting," she said. "We used to go to the Hippodrome or the Ardwick Empire every Saturday night. We never missed, till the family came, and then of course we had to stay in. Well, this *Music Hall* is just the programme for us—same night of the week, same sort of turns. Many of them are the same people—G. H. Elliot, Sandy Powell, Gillie Potter, Elsie Carlisle, Wee Georgie Wood, all that lot. We've seen them all, haven't we, Joe?"

Her husband nodded and grinned. "Aye—but they're not so good on the air. And sloppy! I'd never listen to the thing if it wasn't for the missus. Much too sloppy for me."

His wife gave him an affectionate little push. "Go on!" she exclaimed. "You know you like it as much as I do!"

Likes It Laid On Thick

I don't think there is much doubt that the average listener likes his sentiment as thick as porridge—though without a great deal of coaxing he will disclaim this and pretend a preference for a more tart and acid fare.

But there are reasons other than sentiment for the popularity of *Music Hall*. The fact that it occupies a peak spot on Saturday night, that many of the artists have reputations already established on the halls, that people like the unexpectedness of a variety programme, that it fills this blank space in the lives of so many middle-aged people who once made a Saturday night habit of going to the variety theatres.

By and large, though, *Music Hall* is a success because it is thick with sentiment. It is not a coincidence that *Have a Go!* also soaks itself in sentiment when the occasion offers. Ask half a dozen people to tell you the items they liked best in *Have a Go!* and they are most likely to recall the puddles of sentiment—the old lady bravely singing the song of her golden youth, the Dutchman without arms, the hospital patient full of humour and fortitude, the old soldier reliving the great battles of his early manhood. . . .

The Dickens of 1948?

Itma is a difficult programme to define. I have asked a great many listeners what they like about *Itma* and few of them give an answer which satisfies them—they are mostly better at telling you what they don't like about it.

A South Londoner described *Itma* as the modern equivalent of Dickens. "All the characters are caricatures. Odd, unreal people float in and out with the same irrelevant air with which they float in and out of the pages of Dickens. But of course Dickens's sentiment is missing."

Let us end this week with a bricklayer from Tamworth, who, like the housewife in Peckham, expects his radio to keep the house cheerful. But he never turns off anything except highbrow music.

"I don't half look forward to getting home to the wireless. It's the only part of the day worth living. We have our tea, the missus washes the tea things while I make up the fire and so on, and then we sit comfortably down to listen. I have the paper, too, of course, and the missus has her sewing or something, and when there's something on that we don't like we talk about this and that.

"But what we mainly do is listen to the wireless. Every night. Sundays we listen all day. We never go out like used to. I suppose we've become proper pair of stick-in-the-muds, really.

NEXT ARTICLE: Housewives' Choice

A-FARMING WE WILL GO!

Hot baths and good company soon fix farming aches and pains. And farmers see that it's a real holiday with pay

PAINTED ON A BOARD at the hut door are the words *The Wreck*. The hut is the recreation room. Inside, any Monday evening this summer, will be a crowd of about two hundred young men and women. Despite the rough concrete floor, they will be dancing with gusto to a lively band.

They will be the same people who, dirty and dishevelled, staggered stiffly into Horndon-on-the-Hill agricultural camp only an hour or two before.

The first day's work on the land stretches muscles which volunteers swear they never knew existed. The early weeks of May saw the beginning of the backaché parades in Essex this year. About the same time a hundred similar camps started up all over England and Wales, packed with urban farm-hands by the Ministry of Agriculture's "Lend a Hand on the Land" scheme.

At all of them, the hot-bath-hot-meal treatment disperses the stiffness altogether in a day or two; but the pleasure of mucking about on a farm for a holiday remains.

Now that the German prisoners of war are being sent home, twice as many holiday farmhands, 200,000, are needed this year compared with last. Where I live, we are having three camps instead of last year's two. Against 7,000 in 1947, this summer we want 11,000 holiday volunteers on Essex farms.

The organization which brings a young schoolmistress from Bishop's Stortford to pick plums in an Orsett orchard, or an insurance agent from Streatham to hoe kale on a farm near Southend, is complex, but it works. Six regions cover the country.

Planning Starts in Winter

Beginning in the dark days of winter, there is a snowstorm of paper work. But the real hero is the practical man, or woman, who supplies unskilled town labour to forthright farmers and makes both lots like it: the district labour officer.

At Horndon-on-the Hill his name is Owen Vale. When the camp is operating he keeps worse hours than a cowman: up at 5 a.m., seldom done before 10 or 11 p.m. His week begins on Saturday afternoon, when he organizes lorries to fetch the volunteers from the railway station to the camp.

They are much like an everyday busload of people. Most of them have a companion. In the first lorry, perhaps, there is the schoolmistress with another young woman, the Streatham insurance agent, two chaps from a shipping office, some girls from the G.P.O., a student, three people from Yorkshire. . . .

George Cook, the camp warden, his wife, Dorothy, and the entertainment officer, John Paul, are employed by the Y.M.C.A. Paul is a Scotsman; Cook comes from Northumberland, and was a butcher before he went into the Army on the catering side. Mrs. Cook comes from Northern Ireland. She was a trained nurse before joining the A.T.S. They met and married while in the Forces, and now have a four-year-old daughter, Barbara.

Volunteers assemble in *The Wreck* when they arrive, and are booked in and shown their beds, twenty to a hut, each with a locker and side table. There are no married quarters, no children or dogs allowed.

The clanging of a giant triangle signals the meal. Blackboards set out the times for the normal working day: "Breakfast 6.30—7. Packed lunch (carried). Main meal 5.30—6.0. Supper 9—9.15. Lights out 11 p.m. Mail will be given out at main evening meal. Transport to farms 7.30 a.m."

It is a mixed sit-down. Campers have to bring their own two plates, mug and eating irons. As they file past the hatch there is a server for each item on the menu. Then into the spotless white dining-room, with its elbow-high wainscoting of light green. They sit at scrubbed wooden tables on folding chairs. Round the walls are a score of flower panels, done by a p.o.w. There is light music from the radio, chatter from the eating two hundred.

Already beginning to know one another after their first meal, the campers emerge to find two tubs of hot water, one for washing up and the other for rinsing. Each does his own, and the water is changed several times for each meal. Kitchen staff are hard to find, so over the dish-washing table is an appeal for volunteer potato peelers.

Coach Trips to the Coast

On the second blackboard at the dining-room doorway are details of the week's entertainment, including coach trips to Clacton and Southend for Sunday afternoon. On Sunday morning everybody assembles in *The Wreck* to meet the district labour officer, who makes up the working parties for the various farmers. George Cook takes down the names, appointing one as leader in each party.

The rest of the day goes quickly in outings, or getting together in the camp over darts, netball, table tennis or gramophone records.

Monday morning brings the work. Old clothes, stout boots, an old mackintosh for wet weather, or a hat and long sleeves to guard against too much sun. Breakfast includes eggs one morning, bacon another, fish another, provided the camp gets its allocation. Otherwise it may be cereal, or porridge; spaghetti on toast; tea; bread and butter.

Volunteers collect their packed lunch and scramble into the waiting lorries. The job itself varies from farm to farm, from district to district, and according to the season. At Epping the accent will be on tomatoes. At Birch there are raspberries, blackcurrants, cherries. Nearby at Tiptree the strawberries are famous. At Horndon-on-the-Hill there are plums, apples and pears.

Sometimes the work is less attractive. Hand weeding, hoeing sugar beet, potatoes or cabbage, cutting vegetable seeds, picking peas or runner beans, lifting spuds and beet, or corn harvesting.

"They're amazingly willing," say the farmers. But there is a cheer when the lorry comes.

"Glamoured Up" for Dinner

With everyone washed, changed and "glamoured up," there is a rush for the dining hall. A typical evening dinner is stew (or cold meat and salad) with potatoes and two vegetables, followed by baked apples, steamed puddings or fruit tarts and tea.

Monday night's "get-together" dance transforms the two hundred individuals into one family. The young schoolteacher turns out to be Freda Rayner from Bishop's Stortford, with her friend Joy Turns from the same town.

Freda had just left the training college when she came to Horndon for the first time last year. Now she teaches elementary schoolchildren at Hertford Road, Enfield.

The insurance agent is Jack Coles. He brings his daughter Valerie, eighteen, who works in a publisher's office. It is his fourth time here and he is still intrigued by the people he meets.

Horndon-on-the-Hill opened in 1947 with 120 civil servants. They worked so well that the local farmers immediately asked for more. Their successors included Lancashire folk, two girls from Vienna, a London bus inspector, Swedes, Australians, New Zealanders, a major of seventy-four, a gang of German students, a lieutenant-commander, R.N.V.R., and a Welsh party.

For the organizers, the week has a definite rhythm. Tuesday evening is often quiet, with impromptu rounders, football or cricket. Wednesday's fancy-dress ball brings a tremendous outburst of ingenuity—bathing girls, carrots, monks, sheikhs, plums . . . made out of the unlikeliest materials.

Thursday brings a picture show or concert party. There is a farewell novelty dance and buffet supper on Friday, with everybody packed ready to leave next morning, and wearing their best clothes.

Ordinary holiday camps cannot compete in price with farm camps. Apart from rough working clothes, all one needs is cutlery and crockery, ration cards, a sandwich tin, sheet and pillow slip, toilet things and a towel. Until mid-June and from

Glowings cornfields of Yorkshire, specially volunteers varies with the district. Jo

by JOHN MAY

mid-September onwards, campers pay 21s. a week for board and lodging. Prices rise to 28s. for the busy season. October and November bookers pay only 14s.

Offsetting this there is cheap rail travel, and minimum pay of 1s. 5d. an hour for some forty hours a week from the farmer. Some men from Essex camps last year went on piece work and earned more than £1 a day.

On Saturday morning George and Dorothy Cook shake hands all round, wave farewells, until the last of the campers leaves about ten o'clock. Then they get down to checking blankets, cleaning, ordering, booking, before the next two hundred arrive in a few hours' time.

A farming holiday with pay is the practical way for town folk to help grow and gather vital food. "We'd hate to admit it," one farmer told me, "but this year I reckon the farms simply can't get through without help from the volunteers."

inted for John Bull by Narraway. Work for include vegetable lifting and fruit picking.

Maurice Barclay and friends. His ambition: to fill the Albert Hall

VOICES FROM THE PAST

by HENRY FIRTH

Touch a switch. Listen—the rich, melting voices of the Golden Age: Caruso the Great, young Gigli, and the cheering waiters of Soho

WHEN MAURICE BARCLAY was sixteen, a long-lost aunt turned up from South America and pressed into his hand a golden sovereign "to do what he liked with." Maurice thanked auntie nicely, thought for a moment, then dashed off to book a stall for the celebrity concert being put on at the Queen's Hall in aid of the Red Cross.

Today a successful business man of fifty-two, Barclay can still recall that evening as if it were yesterday.

He can close his eyes and see again the elegant crowd, the red plush, the sea of faces; feel again the awed silence as Caruso strode on to the stage in morning coat and white waistcoat with an enormous diamond pin, the electric moment when he started to sing "O, Paradiso."

"Those top notes of his went right up to the roof and nearly took it off. At the end, stolid, unemotional British stockbrokers were standing up in the stalls, embracing each other. Tears ran down their cheeks."

He Was Fascinated

It was an experience Barclay was never to forget. It came to him as a revelation of the strange, mystical power of the human voice. The phenomenon fascinated him. He found himself haunting auctions, second-hand shops, markets, rummaging among the piles of old records.

The craze soon became a habit. A salesman of advertising space now, his job took him a good deal up and down the country. Arriving in a new town, he'd make a beeline for the gramophone shop and ask the assistant if he happened to have early records of the great Italian singers.

"Generally," relates Barclay, "the assistant just couldn't be bothered to go and hunt up the old stock. So I'd illustrate the sort of thing I wanted. I used to burst into song in the middle of the shop. You'll notice I have a pretty powerful singing voice. The other customers would look up as if shot, then drop everything and run for it.

"After that the assistant found what I wanted, and I generally got them for twopence-halfpenny a record."

Search Without End

Much water has flowed under the bridges since then, and Barclay has seen a good many places and done a good many things. But always this search for vocal buried treasure has gone on, running through his life like an aria in one of his beloved operas, holding it together through good fortune and bad.

Today, in the sitting-room of his London flat, you can see (and hear) the harvest of more than thirty years' collecting—two thousand of the early records of the great Italian operatic stars. Many hundreds more are in store. Some of the records are worth £50 each.

But Barclay is careful to point out that he is no mere collector for collecting's sake. He collects not like the squirrel, but as a prospector collects, sifting away the dross till the pure gold sparkles in the pan.

"I've come back here with five hundred records in the back of my car of a particular voice singing a particular aria, then played them all over to get the best recording extant. I have the finest collection of Caruso records in the world, and the best collection of Italian operatic singers, 1906-21, in Europe."

Of course, you can always walk into a shop and buy "re-created" records of such classic singers, manufactured by the gramophone companies. But such records, says Barclay, the connoisseur, are ninety per cent orchestra, only ten per cent singer. "I'd rather have it ninety per cent singer, ten per cent orchestra"—and that is the way the old records are.

But if you attempted to play them on an ordinary gramophone, you'd hear little but "scratch." So Barclay, "with blood, sweat and tears," devised the intricate and unique machine which now takes up a good deal of the space in his sitting-room. "With this," he told me, adjusting the knobs on the amplifier, "I can bring the voices of the Golden Age right into this room. I can make 'em come alive."

He picked up a record, touched a switch. "La Donna e Mobile" began to roll full-throated from the massive loudspeaker against the wall. Enrico Caruso. The room vibrated. But the voice was clear and undistorted. Caruso the Great. He was alive all right, right here in the room, a buffalo of a man.

"That record was made forty-six years ago, one of the first flat records ever made. It was made in a little upstairs room in Milan. Caruso's great friend, Scotti, took it to the Metropolitan Opera House and, on the strength of it, Caruso was engaged, unseen. How did I get it? From another collector—I gave him four for it."

He showed me another record. "Now that's a sample label. That means it was never issued to the general public. Just one of a few sent round to experts for their opinion. . . ."

A massive voice flooded the room. "Gigli," commented Barclay. "When he was twenty-three and still unknown. A recording from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, made just before he'd left the Conservatoire of St. Cecilia."

Barclay rubbed his hands. "Comes alive, eh? You know I could fill the Albert Hall with this machine. Plaster a quarter of a mile around. In my younger days I was thrown out of forty-six hotels in six months. 'You don't mind a bit of music?' I used to ask them when I went in. 'Oh, no,' they'd say, 'we love it.' So in the evening I'd have my usual celebrity concert.

"Next morning they'd look a bit upset. 'Mr. Barclay, we're awfully sorry, but some of the other guests. . . .' And I would be out again. In one place the local council complained."

Singers Line the Passages

Barclay is immensely proud of this record. To him it represents a tribute to the supreme power of the singers of the Golden Age, the vocal period he dates from 1902 with the first flat disc gramophone recordings and ends with the death of Caruso in 1921. He talks about the Golden Age a lot. The portraits of its great stars line the passages of his flat. He has the details of their lives by heart.

"Old So-and-So here, now . . . a fruit vendor, he was twenty-five inches round neck and beard. You could hear him a good mile away."

But these days, flats and hotel rooms being hard to come by, Barclay's enthusiasm has to be kept on tight rein. That, of course, won't stop him lecturing you by the hour on the lore of the early records, the pioneer Edison-Bell cylinders—comic efforts those; the first flat sapphire-needle Pathés; the pirated records (worth £20 or £30 apiece today) of the Italian *Societe Fonotipia da Bologna*, made in secret; the "pale pinks" and "white singlesiders" of H.M.V.'s progenitor, the Gramophone and Typewriter Company, which in 1904 were all the rage

among the fashionable, selling at fifteen shillings apiece.

One point had been worrying me. How could these old records survive so many years of playing? The expert's explanation: a fibre needle and a light pick-up. "That way I can play a record for twenty years and you'll hardly notice the difference."

He returned to his theme: the all-round excellence of the singers of the Golden Age. "In those days singers really trained for their jobs. Nowadays they want to do it all in five minutes. When a singer went to make a record he didn't just slip down to the studios in a taxi. No, sir, he took four hansoms. Hansom number one took the singer and his accompanist. The second carried the throat specialist. The third was piled high with spaghetti and macaroni and vino. And the fourth was loaded down with the claque.

"The claque were generally Italian waiters from Soho, hired, you know, to cheer and applaud. Listen . . . you'll hear them on this record. . . ."

It was a fine, conscientious claque. The cheers, the foot-stamping, the yells of "*bis!*" (encore) of those Soho waiters, forty years ago, rang out in that Maida Vale sitting-room, sounding so heartfelt and spontaneous that one wanted to join in.

What chance does a collector have who enters this field now? Well, just as Old Masters still come to light now and again in some neglected corner, there are still "finds" to be made among the recorded voices of the past.

Barclay will be glad to hear from any other addicts who want information about old records, or maybe have some to swop. (His address: 226 Preston Road, Wembley, Middlesex.)

For Maurice Barclay still isn't satisfied that he's done his duty by the super-singers of the Golden Age.

He wants to hear those mighty voices rolling over London's roof-tops again as they did when he first went to hear Caruso. He wants to find a sponsor, hire a hall, and put on a full-blooded request programme of the great arias, sung by the great singers.

"The Golden Age," muses Barclay. "Ah, those men, now those men *were* men, and they could *sing*. Just listen to this, for instance. . . ."

THIS WEEK'S COVER

WHAT this boy wanted most in all the world was a dog to fit the huge collar someone had given him. "The collar would have been O/S for a wolfhound," says Michael Critchlow, who painted the cover, "but it didn't trouble the youngster. He had his eye on the puppy and the puppy had its eye on him, and cats, parrots, rabbits and the rest of the world could go by"

Even though he lost, Eric Boon roused the crowd to wild enthusiasm

PUNCH PLUS

by Alan Hoby

Boon in the ring, Bradman at the wicket are among sports stars who have something more than just skill

WHAT CONSTITUTES "colour" in sport? Why do some men stop the traffic while others, of apparently equal ability, have about as much crowd-appeal as a piece of sacking?

This question of personal magnetism has cropped up again with the arrival in Britain of one of the greatest crowd-pullers of all time—an athlete who is showman and artist combined.

Dapper, super-confident, Don Bradman is probably the most extraordinary run-getting machine cricket has known. He has amassed so many hundreds that they say his real batting average works out at approximately one century every two and a half innings!

Yet it is not Bradman's fantastic batting alone which makes him an idol. Performance alone seldom does that in any branch of sport.

Qualities That Matter

Human greatness consists of something more than being simply a cold-blooded, manufactured perfectionist. To draw the masses you have got to be rich in *human* qualities—qualities that identify you with the ordinary man, that suggest warmth and vitality.

Whether the sport is boxing, soccer, rugby, golf or lawn tennis, it is seldom the calculating craftsman who sets the turnstiles clicking or draws queues as long as the *Queen Elizabeth*. In Bradman's case—as in the case of Keith Miller, his fellow-Australian and the world's number one all-rounder—it is an indefinable "something" which, welded to outstanding ability, endears the player to the fans.

This and little mannerisms: good-humoured "gallery-playing," such as Miller's broad grin when he occasionally "bumps" one; or Bradman's habit of settling his cap even more firmly on his head after he has scored his *first* hundred in a double-century.

Bradman's brain, too, is trigger-quick. Spotting the slightest hesitancy or failing in an opponent, he makes the average politician look like a dray-horse.

Let's turn to boxing. Dempsey had mass-appeal, and still has. When over here recently, Nat Fleischer, prominent American boxing journalist, told me: "Dempsey still jams the sidewalks in every city he visits. Louis? Tunney? No, none of the others can draw the crowd as Dempsey does."

Count on Him for Thrills

Over here the ring's biggest draw is still a golden-haired hunk of dynamite called Eric Boon. Ever since winning the lightweight title from Dave Crowley at the age of nineteen, Boon has supplied thrills, colour and action.

They still talk of his duel with Arthur Danahar in 1939 as the most sensational contest ever staged at Harringay. Boon, both eyes practically shut, his nose broken, his lips puffed up like swollen tyres, left his corner in the eighth round, saying to his trainer, "Leave it to me." And he won.

Only recently Boon added a brilliant postscript. After being on the receiving end for five rounds against Robert Villemain, the world's number two welter, Eric suddenly flung out his bombshell left and caught the Frenchman straight on the whiskers.

From a confident, clever fighter, Villemain, in a second, was transformed by that one punch into a rocking invalid with glassy eyes. As Boon smashed blow after blow on his stricken rival hardened ringsiders leapt to their feet and shouted and bawled like schoolchildren. Boon lost, but no one else could have captured a crowd's fancy as he did.

Personality is something you can't buy, something you can't copy. There can be no carbon copy of a Bradman or a Boon or a Dempsey.

Take Georges Carpentier. I was only a boy, but I can still remember the dashing Frenchman. How, after he had chilled George Cook with a paralysing punch, Carpentier hit him again with his steam-laden right while Cook was still a few inches from the floor. Carpentier wanted to make quite sure. But what diabolical speed! What colour and grace!

When Spell Wears Off

Carpentier was a god in those days: good looking, astute, slim as a sword. He was a "classic," but he also had "colour." Most "classics" of sport do, although some, either through boredom or disdain, lose their ruthlessness and sparkle. Plenty of examples come to mind of big names in sport who for a short, brilliant spell have captivated the crowds. Then, having reached the top of the tree, they have become dull and uninspired performers, adopting the motto, "Safety first." Efficient, yes—but so unentertaining.

Perhaps it would be fairer to blame the age than the men. The commercializing of sport has made the result the main thing, whereas the true sporting "classic," however skilful, still retains the sheer joy of playing—win or loose.

In all the lovely tapestry of cricket, Vic Trumper was the supreme "classic"—king of them all—although Jack Hobbs was probably the greatest "draw" English cricket has known.

In lawn tennis, Fred Perry was probably the most dynamic crowd-puller of them all: no academic player, but a full-blooded, temperamental world-beater. Yet for all-round showmanship, class and colour I would place Big Bill Tilden above even Perry. Once I saw the American fling his racket from one end of the court to the other after a heated argument with a linesman. Tilden, master of every stroke, was at times astoundingly arrogant.

Baggy-panted Dazzler

Finally, in football there was Alex James, Arsenal's long-sleeved, baggy-panted pygmy Colossus who, with one waggle of his foot, had them all going the wrong way. I'll never forget Alex. Nor will Arsenal. He drew mammoth crowds wherever he went. He was a natural showman and supremely colourful. Today, of course, the greatest single collector of football crowds is that wizard of dribble, Stanley Matthews.

If I had to draw up a final list of the most colourful sportsmen of all time I would plump for the following: *Cricket*, Bradman; *boxing*, Dempsey; *soccer*, Alex James; *rugby*, Prince Obolensky; *lawn tennis*, Tilden; *golf*, Walter Hagen (U.S.A.), Henry Cotton (Britain); *athletics*, Sydney Wooderson.

After all that, what exactly is "colour" in sport? I would say it is a mixture of many qualities, chief among them gumption and breadth of mind.

What is certain is that you've either got "colour" or you haven't. And if you haven't there's nothing much you can do about it.

FREE SPEECH

Ambulances Take Too Long to Arrive

Racial Discrimination is Still With Us

A FEW YARDS from where I work in Montague Street, London, W.C.1, a workman fell from a scaffolding and pitched head first into an area. Immediately, a member of my staff phoned for an ambulance.

The man was suffering from injuries to the head, a broken jaw and facial abrasions, and was in great agony. Within seven minutes the Press arrived. A doctor was present within fifteen minutes. The police did not arrive at all, and it was forty-five minutes before an L.C.C. ambulance purred gently towards the scene.

A few days later another accident took place at the same spot. A small girl was knocked down by a taxi and her ankle crushed. The police arrived this time within a few minutes. But again it was forty-five minutes before the ambulance arrived—and only after two "reminder" calls were made.

There is a hospital within a hundred yards of this spot, and two others within a quarter of a mile. No possible reason can excuse this shocking time-lag between the summoning and the arrival of ambulances.—G. F. B., London, N.W.4. (Full name and address enclosed.)

Still Plenty of Fun

Miss Norma Clements

I WAS VERY SURprised to read in Roland Wild's article "I Wanted a Yellow Waistcoat" (JOHN BULL, May 8) that "there isn't much genuine amusement left in London for the people who deserve it." Of course there is, but they can't expect to find it if they don't go out and look for it.

I am a seventeen-year-old student at London Polytechnic. My pocket-money doesn't amount to much, but I am able to visit Sadler's Wells Theatre, where I can enjoy an evening's opera for 1s. Sometimes we go to the ballet at Covent Garden. The average gallery seat costs 2s.

And this is only one side of it. The theatre happens to be my particular interest, but with public swimming pools, tennis courts, etc., open to all at very reasonable prices it isn't only the rich who can enjoy themselves.—MISS NORMA CLEMENTS, 38 Heathview, Gordon House Road, London, N.W.5.

Colour Bar in Accra . . .

THE Y.M.C.A. IS SUPPOSED to be an organization formed to encourage friendship and mutual understanding among the people of all races and climes.

It will come as a great surprise to many British people to learn that on the Gold Coast, especially at Accra, in the colony's main branch of the organization, no coloured folk are allowed to enter the same tearooms or enjoy the amenities available to white people.

If this discrimination continues, I think the word "Christian" should be deleted from the association's name and something less hypocritical substituted.—BERNARD LARYEA, P.O. Box 177, Accra, Gold Coast.

. . . And in Britain

MUCH WAS MADE OF THE racial discrimination practised in Germany before the war, yet can we claim to be so very different? A West Indian friend of mine, who volunteered for the Army and served through campaigns in North Africa and Italy, is now studying accountancy in London, and trying to get a job in an accountant's office.

He has had countless interviews with prospective employers, some of whom have admitted that they have been looking for someone with his qualifications (he has passed five out of six intermediate exams and worked in a colonial Treasury department for some years prior to his Army service), yet have frankly admitted their objection to his race.

Many others have refused to interview him on hearing that he was a West Indian.—MISS R. S. KLAFFL, 45 Shelley Gardens, North Wembley, Middlesex.

Advice for Deserted Wife

"DESERTED WIFE" (JOHN BULL, May 8), who could get no help from the court in tracing her runaway husband, should apply to her district Public Assistance Officer.

If destitute, she would receive money to tide her over her difficulties.

And she wouldn't have to worry about searching for her decamped husband: the assisting authority would attend to that, and on finding him see that he paid up the amount his wife had received from them.—F. L. DAVIES, 10 Bedford Road, Newport, Mon.

Don't Look Now

Richard Barton

WHILE STROLLing down the street recently, I saw a young woman struggling to get a pram up a flight of steps. I helped her, and after thanking me she said, "I seem to know your face. What's your name?"

When I told her, truthfully, "Dick Barton," she hurriedly closed the door, supposing, I imagine, that I was an escaped lunatic. Life's hard!—RICHARD BARTON, 4 Rex Street, Hulme, Manchester, 15.

Maharajah's Rolls

I CAN ANSWER the question raised by H. T. Beal regarding the ownership of the magnificent Rolls-Royce photographed in India (JOHN BULL, May 8).

It was made in 1930 for the Maharajah of Kashmir, Sir Hari Singh. The ornamentation on the bodywork is of beaten gold and the cost of the car was £25,000.—W. MCCONVILLE, 83a Tyrwhitt Road, Brockley, London, S.E.4.

Reward for Honesty

DOES IT PAY TO BE honest? My young son recently found some Savings Certificates to the value of £206, which he took to the police station. His reward was 5s. 6d.—H. W. HAYLER, 237 Kingston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey.

Family Holidays . . .

HELEN GOSSE IS RIGHT when she says in "Coping With the Holiday Crisis" (JOHN BULL, May 8) that the cost of holidays is prohibitive for the average family.

Many have, however, like ourselves found a way. "Family Holidays, Ltd.," is a non-profit-making co-operative concern with a well-equipped camp near the Cumberland coast, catering mainly for families with children. I can heartily recommend it.—H. DAVIES, 81 Princes Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

. . . In Scotland, Too

LOWER-INCOME SCOTTISH families are catered for by "Scottish Family Holidays, Ltd.," which aims to provide enjoyable holidays at about £4 a week.

Gordon Castle at Fochabers has been taken over and it is hoped that other centres will be established in other parts of the country.—A. BAPTIE, 43 Grangeburn Road, Grangemouth, Stirlingshire.

Pin-up Boys?

Peter Ross

EVERY SUMMER we read of contests to choose beauty queens, the "best open-air girl of the year," etc.

I do not grudge the girls publicity, but I think it is about time a committee was formed to choose the "best open-air boy." We always sit back and watch girls walking away with the prizes. Boys could put up as good a show.—PETER ROSS, Morden, Surrey. (Full address enclosed.)

Men at the Bar

ALBERT PRUST of Prestbury, Glos, says that pubs should stay open till 11 p.m. so that allotmenteers can have a late drink after finishing for the evening (JOHN BULL, May 8).

Doesn't he ever think of the people who serve him with drinks? We want a bit of time to ourselves. Some people think that all that remains to be done after calling "Time" is to switch off the lights and lock up.

Glasses, counters and tables don't wipe themselves. Those who think serving drinks isn't hard work should take a hand at it themselves some time.—ROYSTON DURSLEY, The Central Hotel, Railway Approach, Worthing, Sussex.

Searle's Art: "Odious" . . .

I AM IN COMPLETE agreement with the views of Mrs. E. Sharples and W. F. Crossland (JOHN BULL, May 8) concerning the odious drawings by Ronald Searle which defile Herbert Hodge's page.

The drawings resemble the scribblings of young children. Such modernistic monstrosities shouldn't be given valuable space. Let's have no more of them.—E. B. CHILDS, 27 Gleneldon Road, London, S.W.16.

. . . Drives the Nail Home

HERBERT HODGE ALWAYS hits the nail on the head, but Ronald Searle drives it home for him.—MISS M. SCHOFIELD, 89 Henry Street, Rochdale, Lancs.

. . . Help Us Chuckle

A STODGY, TRUE-TO-LIFE technique would be most unsuitable for illustrating Hodge's articles. Searle and Hodge form a perfect combination in helping us to chuckle at ourselves.—JAMES A. GILES, 7 Meadow Road, Burpham, Guildford, Surrey.

. . . Hodge's Opinion

I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE that some people do not like Ronald Searle's illustrations to my articles.

Besides bringing out ideally the substance of what I write, he manages at the same time to poke subtle fun at me. He is doing with his exaggerated and grotesque style what the satirist does with words: telling people "Look what funny creatures you are." He tickles me enormously.—HERBERT HODGE, High Wycombe, Bucks.

**** Large response showed three to one ratio in favour of Searle.*—EDITOR.

Too-large Mouths

IN VICTORIAN TIMES a tiny rosebud mouth was considered the acme of beauty. Today, the bigger the mouth, the wider the lips, the better. Mouths are emphasized out of all proportion to the rest of the face. Wherever one looks, at the screen, at posters, at women's magazines, exaggerated mouths are the order of the day.

Many of the beautiful actresses of thirty years ago are still acknowledged as beautiful today. One wonders if in thirty years from now the sultry, pouting "lovelies" of today will still be accepted as beautiful.—MRS. L. DOULL, 53 Loganlea Place, Edinburgh, 7.

Because of space shortage only a limited selection of the many readers' letters submitted can be printed. If your views are squeezed out, it does not mean that they have been overlooked by the Editor. For every letter used, John Bull pays one guinea. Letters should be marked "Free Speech" and carry the full name and address of sender for publication.

"We want some time to ourselves": Royston Dursley who writes to say licensing hours are long enough

WITH MY FEET UP

The Bard Goes West

THE SUCCESS of the film version of *Henry V* and, recently, of Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* has made America take notice. Hollywood has already proposed filming Shakespeare's life story.

I can imagine one of Hollywood's Big Noises discussing the idea with a few Slightly Lesser Noises.

"About this Shakespeare," begins the Big Noise. "I reckoned we ought to know something about this guy before deciding to film his life, so I imported a real Shakespeare professor from England—unfortunately Shakespeare was English. Cost me three thousand dollars, but boy, what he told me about that man!

* * *

"First of all, this guy Shakespeare has been dead about 350 years, which makes it a costume picture. And was he romantic? I'll say he was! This professor said Shakespeare got married in a hurry and had three children before he was twenty-one."

A Lesser Noise chips in. "Have to be careful or we'll get the women's clubs after us."

"Not when it's Shakespeare—he's culture," answers the Big Noise. "In any case, we can skate around the dates. And here's another thing—boy, is it a laugh! In his will Shakespeare left his *second best* bed to his wife."

"Gee, who got the best one?"

"It's a mystery. Even the professor didn't know. But it seems that this Shakespeare had written a lot of poetry to a dark lady. Well, I thought we could change the wording of the poems to make her a blonde, and then cast Lauren Bacall in the part."

"You sure got something there, chief," says a Much Lesser Noise.

* * *

"I was thinking of trying for Cary Grant to play Shakespeare, with Lana Turner for his wife. And here's where we got an edge on those straight Shakespeare films. They only do one play—in a life story we can use the best box office scenes from all the plays. We can use bits of *Macbeth*, and *The Merchant of Venus*, and *Gimlet*, and *As You Want It*, and . . . anyway, the professor says he wrote a whole lot more."

"Musta been clever," says a Very Small Noise.

"And listen, boys. The professor said that, when Shakespeare went to London there is a blank period of seven or eight years in his life about which nothing is known. So we can write in what we like and no one can complain, see? I've already got six writers on the job, and I'm angling for Carmen Miranda, Dorothy Lamour, Jane Russell, Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye. . . ."

by Ian Fox

New blinds from old slats. Besides being smart and modern, blinds help "tired" curtains to last longer

LET THE NEW LOOK IN

by Kay Smallshaw

A FEW DAYS AGO my husband came home with what appeared to be an armful of junk. "Slats," he said briefly. "Venetian blind slats for my model theatre." He's been trying to complete the model for months; but after a quick look at the slats I realized it would take months longer. These slats were interesting!

Like everyone else who is not entitled to dockets, I find the current prices of furnishing materials quite frightening. The sitting-room was not spring cleaned with the rest because the summer curtains are too far gone, and I know that if the twelve-year-old heavy curtains don't come down for a clean and a rest they won't see another winter through. Two sets always seem to be more economical, as well as interesting. The trouble was to produce a second set.

That's why the blinds seemed such an inspiration. At home, until after the first World War, we had starched Nottingham lace curtains in the sitting-room and Venetian blinds. When the sun beat down in the afternoon the slats were turned so that all the air came in, but not the heat. Around half past six when, with a pleasant clapping noise, the blinds were wound up the room seemed deliciously fresh and cool.

At night there were no curtains to draw, but the blinds were lowered with the slats turned flat. They gave a special sort of cosiness and finish to the room.

The New Look in clothes, which is nothing but bygone styles adapted to current conditions, is giving us all a welcome "lift." So what about going to the past for furnishing ideas, too? Especially if it will ease present difficulties.

I found I could buy quite cheaply as many Venetian blind slats as I wanted. So the theatre is laid up again, for the home handyman has been cajoled into another painting job. Done in a cool green to match the woodwork, the blinds already look rather smart and modern. With a cutting from a magazine as incentive, I had hoped for a stencilled design of stars, but decided that was too ambitious.

Anyway, when the frilly edged curtains of dyed linen scrim are hung in position the effect should be fresh and "different."

Scrim comes and goes in the shops, but when obtainable has a good deal in its favour. Compared with nets, it's hard wearing, though not so soft-draping, and it's cheap for these days, too. Owing to its slight stiffness it hangs well and doesn't soil too quickly.

That Remnant of Chintz

The magazine gave my memory another useful jog. I'd had a remnant of chintz put away for ages, just because there wasn't enough of it.

In the U.S.A. they've always been fond of "drapes." They are side curtains, often sold ready made, with fixed pleats or gathers at top. They are not meant to be drawn across the window, so they are cut much narrower than usual.

If cut long enough to come to the top of the skirting and then looped back with ties they have quite an air, yet they save material. My narrow chintz will just work out, and I think the idea is worth carrying out elsewhere.

Like a good many others, I've had my doubts about the utility of plastics outside the kitchen or bathroom. Now, having made a successful job of the kidney dressing-table and the matching "drapes" for the bedroom windows, I'm enthusiastic.

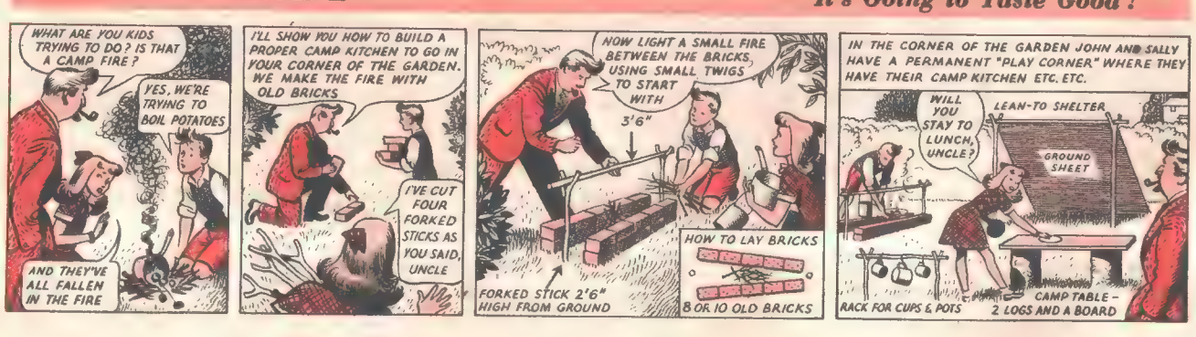
When sewing plastics you need a largish stitch and not too tight a tension on the machine. Instead of pinning or tacking use paper clips, as pin marks can't be pressed out. There are no frayed edges to contend with, so only single turnings are necessary.

If curtains present a problem, chair covers are worse.

Although it's far too loosely woven to be really satisfactory, I haven't found a substitute for dyed hessian loose covers. Alternatives are far too expensive. Experience has taught me that having the arms and seat of double thickness, with an interlining of firm material between, is worth the extra work.

At present I'm waiting to see the result of a friend's experiment. Two of her chairs are being tight-covered with dyed army blankets. Piped with contrasting braid the appearance should be quite good. The question is, will the covers be uncomfortably hot or mark easily? My husband declares so, but then most men are very conservative, I find!

UNCLE ANDY *It's Going to Taste Good!*


WHAT ARE YOU KIDS TRYING TO DO? IS THAT A CAMP FIRE?
YES, WE'RE TRYING TO BOIL POTATOES
AND THEY'VE ALL FALLEN IN THE FIRE
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO BUILD A PROPER CAMP KITCHEN TO GO IN YOUR CORNER OF THE GARDEN. WE MAKE THE FIRE WITH OLD BRICKS
I'VE CUT FOUR FORKED STICKS AS YOU SAID, UNCLE
NOW LIGHT A SMALL FIRE BETWEEN THE BRICKS, USING SMALL TWIGS TO START WITH
3'6"
FORKED STICK 2'6" HIGH FROM GROUND
HOW TO LAY BRICKS
8 OR 10 OLD BRICKS
IN THE CORNER OF THE GARDEN JOHN AND SALLY HAVE A PERMANENT "PLAY CORNER" WHERE THEY HAVE THEIR CAMP KITCHEN ETC. ETC.
WILL YOU STAY TO LUNCH, UNCLE?
LEAN-TO SHELTER
GROUND SHEET
RACK FOR CUPS & POTS
CAMP TABLE – 2 LOGS AND A BOARD

OLD THUD

by A. E. D. SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY TONY WEARE

Whenever the familiar pounding of Old Thud ceased, folk in the Highland glen felt something was amiss

LONG BEFORE you reached Luibmhor—the "Big Bend"—on the Glen road and came in sight of the smoke from the tall distillery stack, Old Thud's heavy, rhythmic pounding told you that the "working," or distilling, season had come round again, and that good Highland whisky was once more running from the still-heads of Glen-Cleitach.

Housewives in the workmen's cottages complained that the thumping of the big old beam engine that had come out of a Clydeside engineering shop away back in the sixties of last century sometimes shook the dishes from their kitchen shelves; and with a favourable wind it was said to be audible to folk living ten miles away at the head of the Glen.

To a stranger, Old Thud's monotonous, heaving pounding might have seemed incongruous amid the quiet of the Highland hills, but to the Glen folk it was really a good sound—a sound of solid comfort. It signified, as it had signified to their fathers and grandfathers before them, welcome winter employment for scores of local people who otherwise would have been wholly and hungrily dependent the whole year round upon their grudging little crofts.

Indeed, for the first few days of the "silent season"—which for Highland distilleries means those summer months when, partly for lack of water, and partly because you cannot get satisfactory fermentation in hot weather, the actual process of whisky-making is temporarily suspended—the cessation of his familiar pounding always gave the local folk an acute sense of something missing in the daily round. Something that they missed as they would have missed the shouting and the laughter of the bairns coming down the Glen road to school, or the bleating of the ewes at the time of the separation of lambs.

Glen-Cleitach Distillery was one of those old-fashioned family concerns, now, like so many other good things, passing from Highland life. Its head, old Colonel Mackerrall, had, as a "terrier," shown himself in two wars as good at soldiering as he was at whisky-making. Visitors to the distillery were always shown the primitive little thirty-gallon pot-still, now carefully preserved in the colonel's private office, with which his great-grandfather had set up the business.

It had all prospered from the start. Its product was the real McCoy; none of your degenerate Lowland-cum-Sassenach concoction masquerading under a Highland-sounding label, but a plain, stomach-comforting, heart-mellowing, honest-to-goodness, pure Highland malt whisky.

This whisky depended on its merits and was seldom advertised. Connoisseurs, indeed acting on the principle that there can never be too much of a good thing, were inclined to keep the knowledge of its existence to themselves. It had been said that if a Scot in any part of the world took you aside and produced from some secret cubby-hole a bottle of Glen-Cleitach you could be sure that you were very close indeed to his heart.

But with increasing demand, each proprietor in his generation had been compelled to extend the original premises and plant, adding a new malt-kiln here, a new mash-tun there, sticking on bits to this and that corner. The place had gradually become a rambling mass of buildings and sheds and courtyards and alleyways, which a stranger would have found as puzzling to explore as a maze. And inevitably, most of these additions had meant more wheels to turn—more machinery to add to the burdens of Old Thud.

All through the working season, passing power down to basements, up to top storeys and around corners through a crazy layout of pulleys and belts and pinions that would have delighted the heart of a Heath Robinson, Old Thud was at his pounding. . . . Thirty-five strokes to the minute, never varying, his gleaming, four-inch piston emerged from its ancient cylinder, thrust ponderously upward amid a vast wheezing and snorting of steam, momentarily hesitated at the top of its stroke, and then completed the turnover of the great main crank with the earth-shaking thump that had given him his affectionate nickname.

Every piece of machinery in the place depended on him. If Old Thud stopped, everything stopped.

But Old Thud rarely did stop. Big Murdo saw to that. Big Murdo was the oldest employee, and for more than fifty years his special job had been to look after all the distillery machinery. Recently, much against his will, they had given him an assistant; but Old Thud, whom he knew and loved down to the last spring-washer, still remained his own particular charge.

"See here, laddie," he had said to the newcomer, "Ah'm no wantin' ye, but seein' ye're here, ye can go roon wi' an oil can, and maybe try your hand at mending a bit belt noo an' then; but ye'll no touch the big engine, mind. That's my job. Lay a spanner on her, an' I'll brain ye." And the young man hadn't.

Big Murdo watched sourly. Maybe they'd get caught in the machine

But time marches on, and not always to a happier goal, and so there came a certain morning when the old colonel was found dead in his bed. He died a bachelor and his sole heir was a young nephew who had taken to city ways, and to whom whisky was all right when you drank it in a London club, but all wrong when you had to make it in a remote Highland glen.

This young man had married a Sassenach girl of his own kind, and the pair of them had no use at all for Highland folks and Highland ways.

Big business, with a snout ever a-quest for likely prey, lost no time in following the scent. It was not, however, so much a case on this occasion of the fox gobbling up the duckling as of the duckling begging to be gobbled up. So a cheque that was not so fat as it might have been changed hands; young Archie Grant and his wife moved into a still more expensive Mayfair flat; and, passing thus from the hands of the family that had held it for four generations, Glen-Cleitach Distillery became a minor appanage of British United Alcoholic Products, Ltd.

In due course the B.U.A.P.'s "high heid yin," accompanied by a retinue of departmental lesser "heid yins," came up to inspect the combine's latest acquisition. He was a shrewd-eyed gentleman who glanced distastefully at the misty hills, glanced casually at the buildings and plant and glanced not at all at the workpeople; but he did much more than glance at the profit and loss accounts.

The brewer-manager was called in for questioning. He was a forthright Morayshire loon who touched his hat to no man save the "minister," and was admittedly one of the best men in the North at his job; in possible consideration of which he was grudgingly informed that he would be left to carry on much as before, but that the company looked to him, of course, to make every effort to cut down working expenses.

Suddenly the "high heid yin" cocked his ears. Absorbed till then in the ledgers and accounts before him, he had apparently just become aware of Old Thud's steady pounding.

"What the devil is that thumping noise?" he demanded. "Sounds as if some of the ruddy machinery was shaking itself to pieces." He turned to one of his satellites. "Here, Jones, that's your department. Go and see what it's all about."

In a few minutes the young man returned. "They've got an ancient contraption over there in the engine-house that must have been used to drive Noah's ark," he said. "The marvel is, though, that it works, and is probably good for years yet. Merely wants a new main crank bearing. There's nearly half an inch play in the old one. That's what's causing the noise. I'll send up a couple of fitters to do the job."

The fitters duly arrived—two modern, derisive young men from Glasgow, with no respect at all for old tried things and methods. With astonishing speed, while Big Murdo sourly watched them and darkly hoped that one or other of them would get caught in the machinery, they yanked out the ancient main crank bearing, tossed it contemptuously on a scrap-heap, replaced it with a brand-new phosphor-bronze fitting, tightened up a few nuts here and there and departed.

And with their departure, Old Thud ceased to thud.

They say that if a ship's engines suddenly stop in the night in mid-ocean,

every sleeper on board instantly awakes. It was like that in the Glen. Folks sat up in bed and cocked their ears, uneasily aware that something untoward had happened. A strange silence seemed to fill the Glen.

They were still making whisky at Glen-Cleitach; smoke still poured from the tall distillery stack; but Old Thud had ceased his age-long accompaniment, and life just wasn't the same at all.

BIG MURDO visibly drooped. For hours he would lean over the guard rail staring at the engine he had tended so long. Thirty-five strokes to the minute—aye, the glistening piston still rose and fell with its old deliberate purposefulness, but save for the mild flapping of the main driving-belt the only sound now to be heard in the enginehouse was a whisper of steam as gentle and tenuous as a sleeping bairn's sigh. Ach! it was a fair disgust.

"Them and their new-fangled ways!" he snorted to his crony, Willie-the-smith, as they sat together one night in the "Cleitach Arms." "Wasn't she doing her work well enough before? Never a hitch in all the fifty-three years Ah've kenned her. Mark my words, Willie; that new bearing'll crack up one o' these nights when we least expect it. It's ower tight for one thing."

"Maybe you're right, Murdo," agreed the smith, whose main work, like that of most present-day country blacksmiths, lay more in the repairing of tractors than the shoeing of horses. "Yon laddies from Glasgow seemed young enough for the job, and it's me that kens they're no putting the same stuff in nowadays."

"Ah'm telling ye we'll ha'e a breakdown one o' these nights, as sure as death," repeated Murdo gloomily.

"Well, wouldn't that serve 'em right?" queried the smith. He paused in the act of lifting his glass, shot a queer glance at his friend, stared thoughtfully for a moment at the ceiling and added musingly, "A breakdown, Murdo. Man, wouldn't that just gi'e them all a right showing-up?"

It was on a night not long after this, when the blacksmith, as was his wont, had dropped into the engine-house for a pipe and a "crack" with his friend, that the catastrophe happened. Old Thud, for the first time in his long and honourable career of service, broke down.

The "brewer" was just going to bed, and the sudden failure of the electric light was alone sufficient to bring him hurrying half-dressed into the engine-house. Big Murdo met him with impassive features. "Maybe it's no serious," he said calmly. "Ah'll just need tae ha'e a look round."

The "brewer" grew frantic. Unless the big engine could be quickly got going again his whole week's mash would be ruined. As soon as the post office opened he would have to wire the Glasgow office to rush up an expert.

Big Murdo patted his shoulder with a grimy hand. "Maybe there'll be no need for that, come the morn," he said soothingly. "Maybe it's something that me and Willie-the-smith atween us can put right in a twa-three hours. Ye canna' do anything meantime, anyhow, so awa' back tae your bed, man, an' leave it tae us."

So left to Big Murdo and Willie-the-smith it was. No one saw them at their work, for their first step had been to bolt and bar the engine-house door; but with the first grey light of the wintry morn their toil and sweat was apparently rewarded. Old Thud was himself again—his real self.

Thirty-five strokes to the minute! His gleaming piston thrusting ponderously upward amid a vast wheezing and snorting of steam, momentarily pausing at the top of the stroke, and then completing the turnover of the great main crank with the earth-shaking thud that the Glen had known and loved so long.

OLD THUD was himself again. Once more the schoolboys straggling down the Glen road smacked their right fists into their left palms and joyously chanted their imitation of his pounding; once more the local housewives grumbled happily as the dishes on their kitchen shelves resumed their old-time dancing.

The barking of the dogs, the bleating of the ewes, the rattle of the mail-van were relegated to their due and humble rôles as mere side-noises. Old Thud was once again the dominant voice of the Glen.

It remains to be recorded that Big Murdo and Willie-the-smith—usually most temperate of men—were inexplicably, but most thoroughly and happily, drunk for nearly the whole of the following week. Afterwards, both of them solemnly protested their entire inability to remember what they had done with the brand-new bearing so recently installed by the derisive young men from Glasgow.

MR. VINNERY STAYED UPSTAIRS:

Continued from page 10

bed, turned away towards the wall. He was huddled up, his knees as close as he could bring them to his chin. His fists were in his eyes. The impression was very much as of a hurt child.

"Mr. Vinnery!" Hazel called out. Had he heard this time? Was there a slackening in the crying? Was it continuing as before?

"Mr. Vinnery!" Hazel called out again, this time quite loud.

The crying stopped. Mr. Vinnery turned round in his bed. He removed his clenched fists from before his eyes. The eyes, curiously blank and unfamiliar, stared in the direction of the open door, the sound that had been uttered, the woman who had uttered it. Then gradually the eyes filled with an awareness, whether the thing they were aware of was or was not there. The face contorted with hatred, the upper lip pulling away quite dreadfully from the left side of the upper teeth. The hands groped blindly around and above the bed as if they were seeking some deadly implement to hurl at the image that had formed itself there, in the open doorway.

Then words issued from under Mr. Vinnery's pulled-back lip.

"You!" he cried. "*You!* Get out, *get out*, you bitch!"

Like a shadow, quickly, quietly, Hazel stepped across the threshold, pulling the door to after her. There she stood swaying for a moment or two, not knowing whether she was going to faint or be sick. But she did neither. She looked like Dresden china, but she had stamina. She took herself in hand and walked firmly down the stairs. But the moment she got into the sitting-room, stamina or no stamina, she put her hand up to her face and burst into tears.

"Darling!" cried Prudence. "Darling, what is the matter? Has anyone . . . has anyone been rude?"

"Hazel, dear, pull yourself together!" requested Joan, who had just come downstairs.

"The poor thing!" sobbed Hazel. "The poor, poor thing!" Her only feeling was pity for Mr. Vinnery. She knew he was not responsible.

"Anything the matter with Mr. Vinnery?" asked Joan.

"He has not been down to breakfast, Joan," Prudence explained, "and Hazel went up to see."

HAZEL told exactly what had happened, excepting that she couldn't bring herself to utter that odious last word. She was terribly grieved, but above all she was puzzled. "What's it all *about*?" Hazel asked piteously. "What does it *mean*? Poor, dear Mr. Vinnery!"

"I think I know," said Prudence, tight-lipped. (She was really very sensible, Prudence.) "The fact is—you must have reminded him of some woman, sometime in his life. She broke his heart, I mean. You remember, he uttered a name like Grace the first day he came. It may have been something in your face, Hazel, or just something in your voice. It brought her back to him."

"But why today?" asked Hazel. "He's . . . he's always been so polite in his nice, quiet way."

"What's the date?" asked Joan. She looked up at the calendar. "Oh, yes, May the fifteenth. The day the insurances fall due. That's the day it happened"—she was quite positive—"the thing Prudence is talking about. The treachery. This Grace ran away with another man. Or perhaps he surprised them together." It was evident that Joan was drawing a certain amount of pleasure out of her speculating. She was quite ready to accept Grace now as a working proposition.

"Yes, yes," interrupted Prudence. "That must have been a long time ago. What are we going to do *now*?"

"I *do* hope you won't send him away, will you?" begged Hazel. "He looked so awfully pitiful, screwed up there in his bed like a small boy."

Prudence thought. Joan got out the cheque book. Hazel sniffed.

"Perhaps it won't happen again," said Prudence.

"I'm sure it won't," said Hazel, and she was the one who had been insulted. She was a generous little creature.

"Look out for next May the fifteenth," cautioned Joan drily.

"Have you telephoned the fishmonger, Hazel?" asked Prudence. "You know how quickly he sells out!" That was how the matter of Mr. Vinnery was left for the time being.

NOTHING happened all that day. About teatime, Hazel, a little tentatively, suggested that the daily woman might take Mr. Vinnery up a cup of tea. "I don't think, perhaps, I ought to myself," she added, "unless you think it will be all right."

"Nothing of the sort," snapped Prudence. "Not you, nor Mrs. Tate, nor anybody. Let it work out of his system."

"He'll be as right as rain tomorrow," pronounced Joan. "He'll be down for breakfast, and fit as a fiddle." (It was generally agreed that Joan was a first-rate psychologist.)

And Joan was right. Mr. Vinnery *was* down for breakfast, and fit as a fiddle.

"Good morning, my dears," he said, twinkling behind his spectacles. "Fish today, is it? Splendid! Splendid!" He must have talked like that in the days when a good speech of his had sent the Opposition scuttling. It was clear he had not the faintest knowledge of what had happened the day before. He did not seem to be aware that for him there had been no day; it had slipped through his fingers like a raindrop that alights on a wet pavement, and might never have been there.

Joan smiled. She winked, too. She was pleased she had been proved right. The wink meant, of course: "There you are, didn't I tell you?" Prudence nodded. Hazel nodded. Dear Joan was really very good at this psychology. Mr. Vinnery made a hearty breakfast, and set off on his constitutional.

"But I . . . I can't understand," breathed Hazel. "Perhaps it didn't happen at all? Perhaps I was dreaming." They could see Mr. Vinnery through the window, striding down the Crescent like a footballer.

"Not at all," said Joan firmly. "The subconscious mind plays some very strange tricks." She talked about it just the least bit as if it were a performing poodle.

"It will be all right, won't it, Prudence?" said Hazel. "Our doing nothing about it, I mean."

"It'll be all right, I think," Prudence assented.

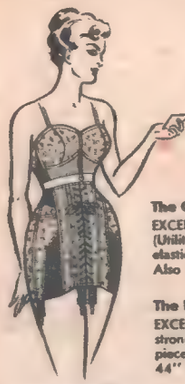
It was all right that day, that week, that month. All the rest of the months that year were all right. The Victoria Crescent Hotel acquired new stair carpets. A bishop came and went, severely indifferent to the type of lady he rubbed shoulders with as he walked up the street towards the hotel and down the street away from it. Mr. Vinnery continued to shed his unemphatic lustre upon the scene.

April ended. May began. The morning of May the fifteenth came round again.

It was, as it happened, Joan's turn for stop-in-bed once again, as it had been the morning of a year ago, but she came down. She liked being proved right, a pardonable failing, and she was. Mr. Vinnery did not come down for breakfast.

"You see?" said Joan. "Shall I tell

Continued on page 21



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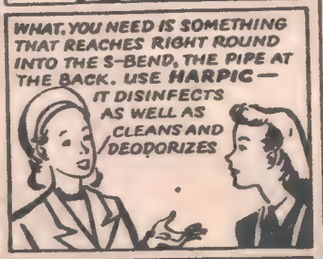
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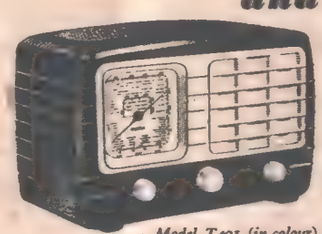

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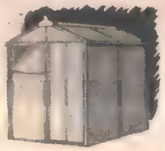

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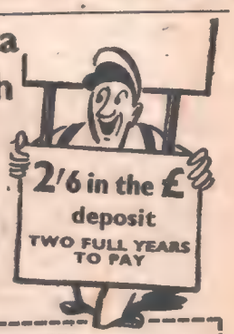

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GD 278C-76

MR. VINNERY STAYED UPSTAIRS:

Continued from page 18

you what's happening now? He's hunched up in his bed thinking of Grace and he's crying his eyes out."

"Shall I go up and see?" asked Hazel, which was not very wise of her. She was by way of feeling that Mr. Vinnery was her own special charge.

"Certainly not!" cried Prudence. "I'll go!"

"So will I!" said Joan.

The two ladies went upstairs. With great caution they advanced along the new stair carpet towards Mr. Vinnery's door. There the sound was, very low, very faint, but oh, how heart-breaking.

"Poor old man!" breathed Prudence, the tender mouth belying the somewhat hard chin.. "Come, Joan. We must leave him to it. There's nothing we can do, nothing."

"Nothing!" echoed Joan. "*Isn't* it sad!" There were tears in the eyes of both ladies as they went downstairs again.

Twelve months went by once more. Once more it was May the fifteenth. This year the ladies did not even lay Mr. Vinnery's place for breakfast, at that special table for him near the fireplace. They knew he wouldn't be down, and he was not down.

"I think I'll just go and make sure," whispered Joan. She went off and came back a few minutes later. She nodded and shrugged her shoulders. "Ah, well," sighed Hazel. "That's how it is!"

The three ladies did not give Mr. Vinnery another thought. It was after all a routine now. Mr. Vinnery would be down for breakfast as usual next morning, not quite so alert as he had been a year or two ago, for he was getting on, now. But he would be down all right, the sun shining on his spectacles.

"Porridge, my dears?" he would ask. "With cream? That cream you make up so cleverly. How do you do it, my dears?"

MAY the fifteenth came round for the fourth time since it had become signalized by something more than the signing of the cheque for the insurances. Mr. Vinnery did not come down for breakfast Of course he did not. The ladies did not expect him to come down for breakfast on the morning of May the fifteenth; or for lunch or tea for that matter.

Hazel did not come down for breakfast, either. That was fit and proper, too. It was Hazel's turn for stop-in-bed. It was half-past nine, now. It was ten o'clock. She was usually down by ten o'clock. (It was understood that no one disturbed anyone on the morning you stayed in bed. If you wanted a cup of tea, you made one for yourself, on your own little electric kettle. But nobody fussed about bringing people breakfast. The idea was you were to have your sleep out.)

But you were generally up for ten o'clock. Certainly you practically never stayed in bed as late as eleven o'clock. And it was ten minutes past eleven, now. Prudence looked at Joan. Joan looked at Prudence. They looked uneasy, both of them.

"She'll be down soon," said Prudence. "Poor dear, I thought she looked very tired last night." But even as she spoke, she was moving towards the door. "She shouldn't be as late as this. I'm going up."

Without a word, Joan rose and followed her. They went up the first staircase, then up the second. The way to Hazel's room led beyond Mr. Vinnery's door. Prudence was leading the way. She turned and placed her finger on her lips.

"Listen!" her mouth went.

Both ladies stopped and listened. There was no sound from Mr. Vinnery's room,

Continued on page 22

HE'LL SOON SEE SWITZERLAND

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2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee, enclose P.O. or stamps at the rate of 6d. for each two *Bullets*. Plain paper entries are allowed. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests in JOHN BULL dated June 26, also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding.

ADD 2, 3 or 4 WORDS to any of these "EXAMPLES"

To make a *Bullet*, add simply TWO, THREE or FOUR words of apt and original comment to any of the *Examples* on right. To use an incomplete *Example*, first complete it with any one word in place of dotted line—then make *Bullet* as usual.

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Good Ship, Uno	Motorist's Dream	
Let's Be Bold And	When I Retire	
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In Life's Drama	In Dad's Garden	
Cold War	Would Fill A Book	
To Posterity	**Incomplete "Examples" see instructions**	
Shining	Human.....	
Reign Of Terror	Left No.....	
Deserted Road	From Every.....	
Carefree Holiday	Trifling With.....	
Cry From The Heart	Nice For The.....	
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American Tourist		

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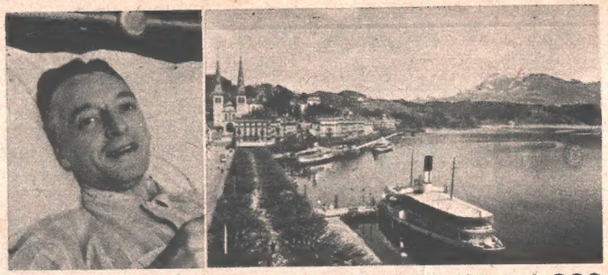

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THIRD PRIZE, £10 plus Seaside Holiday: E. A. Rossell, 11 Ashworth Avenue, Ruddington, Notts: HAPPY DAY — ONLY "GOODBYE, NURSE!" MARRED.

EIGHT of £5 plus Seaside Holiday: E. Brien, 40 Highlands Avenue, Spinney Hill, Northampton: WORLD WE LIVE IN—HOPES OF—YOURS, SONNY! H. Conn, Basement Flat, 126 Amhurst Road, Hackney, London, E.8: AT THE BEAUTY PARLOUR—AUNTIE'S "TYRE" DEFLATING "MECHANICS"! J. W. Dawson, 35 Lennon Drive, Whetley Lane, Bradford: COULD DO WITH A MILLION — MORE WORKERS, OVERCROWDED BRITAIN! Miss P. Donaldson, 16 Rouge Bouillon, Jersey: THE RUSSIAN STEAM-ROLLER—REPLACED BY GIANT "GRAB." R. G. Dyer, 33 Wellesley Road, Wanstead, E.11: HAPPY DAY —WHEN *Austerity's* "MANDATE" ENDS. L. Kelley, 71 Chelmsford Road, Stockport: TALKING WAR—WITH JAW STILL TENDER! H. Lightbody, 62 Britannic Street, Belfast: ONE OF THE SANDWICHES—PRISED OPEN WAITING-ROOM DOOR! T. Tomlinson, 70 Alyth Crescent, Clarkston, Renfrewshire: THE RUSSIAN WAY—NIBBLE, NIBBLE, NIBBLE—NOBBLE!

Holidays arranged by Cook's—20 Prizes of £2 and 1,000 "Good Shots" have also been posted.

CHEQUES AND HOLIDAYS WON XWORD 580

WINNING WORDS. ACROSS: 1, Pest. 2, Coach. 4, Cop. 5, Eight. 8, Shares. 11, Road, 13, Gun. 14, Notion. DOWN: 1, Parts. 3, Hatter. 6, Gabble. 7, Nets. 9, Lawn. 10, Bolt. 12, Din.

TWO £100 SHARERS: Miss Bean, Branksome Gardens, St. Leonards-on-Sea; G. A. Brown, 40 Wadham Road, Woodthorpe, Nottingham. Winners also receive Week's Seaside Holiday for Two.

Awards value £25 for Runners-up shared between 37 entrants.

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THIS WAY TO WIN

FIRST complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues on right. Then, if you wish to enter *one* extra Answer to any *one, two or three* Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

If you prefer to send extra sets of Answers on plain paper, you may do so, but form below saves you the time, trouble and paper involved.

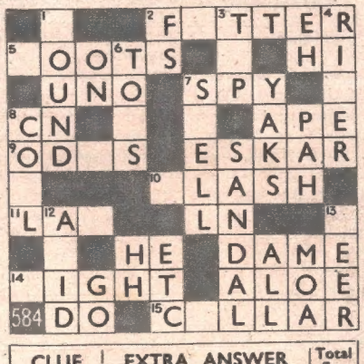
Across Clues **XWORD 584**

2. Being this compared with average man can help you in times of illness
5. Particular noise made by these is likely to get on one's nerves
9. Long ones aren't quite so easy to bring off
10. Often follows flare-up
11. Barrister has little hope of successfully defending bad
14. Poor one may reduce boxer's chance of victory
15. You may be glad of certain amount of slack in your

Down Clues

1. Tome is often this in leather
3. Certain kind is likely to hum
4. Babbling of one may do a man a bit of good
6. Some young monkeys wear them out first
7. May also put a man off his food
8. Way this goes can give you a shock
12. This kind of soil isn't conducive to luxuriant growth
13. Wants a head on

WIN A CHEQUE AND SEASIDE HOLIDAY



CLUE	EXTRA ANSWER	Total Fee
No.		6d.
No.		1s.
No.		2s.

(Total fee shown includes entry on Square)

In adjudication, all Extra Answers will be read in combination with each other and with all Answers in your Square. Thus your completed Square with *one* extra Answer to *one* Clue will represent *two* full Squares (Entry-fee 6d.), Square with one extra Answer to *two* Clues will represent *four* full Squares (Entry-fee 1s.), and Square with one extra Answer to *three* Clues will represent *eight* full Squares (Entry-fee 2s.).

Single Square with 6d. P.O. or stamps covers dispatch to you of *Crossword Gazette* dated June 19.

Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per Contest and to entry requiring not more than 4s. entry-fee. Signature below is agreement to Rules.

584 Closing Postmark, MON., JUNE 7

I enclose P.O. value....

No. .....

Signed .....

Address .....

.....

AS I WAS SAYING . . . by HERBERT HODGE

ME, MYSELF AND I

My Uncle Henry managed to earn a living driving a hansom—but only because he had such an intelligent horse

I CAN'T HELP BEING SURPRISED, now and again, at the odd way some people read my simple writings. I once watched a New York customs man spend several minutes reading one of my books upside down. He looked extremely worried at what he saw, and said he couldn't allow me to bring the book into the U.S.A. without first showing it to a censor.

Which made me feel I must be a much more powerful writer upside down than I am right way up.

And now here's a chap complaining to the editor because, he says, I make him feel sick. He hasn't been reading me upside down, but he's been doing something which is evidently almost as disastrous. He's been giving all his attention to the "I"s and "me"s.

He writes: "Is it necessary for your contributor, Mr. Herbert Hodge, to refer to himself so often in his outpourings? In one short article, he makes use of the personal pronoun no fewer than seventy-four times."

Then comes the painful part. "I counted them. The result was nauseating."

I don't wonder at that. Counting all those "I"s and "me"s is enough to make anybody's head swim. The thing to do is to read *between* them.

The Perfect Answer

All the same, the question of why I do it demands an answer. The answer I like best is Lewis Carroll's:

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head—
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," Father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

That has always seemed to me the perfect answer to this kind of question. I defy anyone to find a flaw in it.

But of course there are other answers. In my own case I think one answer is my Uncle Henry. My Uncle Henry was reckoned to be the fool of the family. He managed to earn a living by driving a hansom cab. But the family said this was only because he'd got such an intelligent horse.

My Uncle Henry never argued—not even when the family kept telling him what a fool he was. He simply sat there, smiling and chumbling his pipe between his toothless gums (he'd had all his teeth knocked out through flying over the roof of his cab so many times, when his horse slipped down). And when at last the angry member of the family paused for breath, Uncle Henry would look up and say: "You don't know. You only think you know."

Although I didn't realize it at the time, he must have made a deep impression on my young mind. He's been dead and gone these thirty years or more. Yet, whenever I pick up a pen to hold forth on any subject, I hear him again: "You don't know. You only think you know."

And I can't help feeling he's right—even if he was the fool of the family. So I have to begin: "I think. . . ."

I know this strikes some people as a clumsy way of writing. Posh writers avoid it. They use, instead, phrases like "every intelligent person" or "all right-thinking people" or "all loyal members of the party"—or whatever they imagine is most likely to persuade their readers to swallow the argument. I can't do that. I only know what *this* man thinks—this "I."

One Can't, Can One?

The poshest writers, of course, avoid such usage by speaking of "one." But I've never been able to keep up with that kind of writing. By the time one's written a dozen sentences, one's become so tangled with this one and that one that one can't, for the life of one, make up one's mind what or which one one's talking about. It's almost enough to make one perspire—if one's genteel skin were capable of so vulgar an emission.

I've tried all these ways of writing in my time. But I've always had to come back to the plain "I think," as the only way of saying what I mean. It's the truth I'm looking for, rather than the elegance. Elegance, I feel, often serves only to hide the truth.

I like to think of myself as a disciple of Montaigne—another chap who was always writing about himself, back in the sixteenth century.

Written As It's Spoken

Montaigne said: "I desire to be seen in my simple, natural everyday dress, without artifice or constraint." And, of writing, he said: "It is a natural, simple, unaffected speech that I love, so written as it is spoken, and such upon the paper as it is in the mouth . . . pithy, sinewy . . . free, loose and bold . . . not pedantical, nor friarlike nor lawyerlike, but rather downright, soldierlike."

But, for the reader who prefers a more genteel style, with plenty of elegant variations, there is always Roget's *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*. If the chap who finds my "I"s and "me"s so nauseating cares to look in the index of that work, he will find me so listed under the letter H. Section 879.

It opens with "The lower orders, the vulgar herd," and goes on to "a commoner, one of the people."

He will probably find exactly what he wants a little lower down, in the paragraph beginning: "swain, clown, hind, clodhopper, chaw-bacon, hodge, joskin, yokel, bumpkin," and ending with "street-arab, guttersnipe, mudlark."

Altogether, this Section 879 should give him at least twenty elegant variations on my name, which he can substitute for the plain "I" or "me." And all of them are fairly accurate—I think. Except, perhaps, "chaw-bacon." I can't qualify as a chaw-bacon at the moment. I don't get enough of it.

IN NEXT WEEK'S JOHN BULL

Eire Gets the Cleaners In . . . by Harry Hopkins;

A new Inspector Chafik Story by Charles B. Child

MR. VINNERY STAYED UPSTAIRS:

Continued from previous page

no sound at all. It was frighteningly quiet, much more frightening than the moaning they had heard issue from that room last year, and the year before, and the year before that.

"Perhaps he's all right this time," murmured Joan. "It may have worked itself out. Maybe he's asleep."

"Yes, of course, he's asleep," repeated Prudence. They walked on, to the end of the passage, and around to the left along the little lobby where Hazel's room was.

"Quiet!" said Prudence suddenly. "What's that?" A sound issued from Hazel's room, but it was not the sort of sound you associated with her room, or her. It was the sound of a low, faint moaning, and it was a man's voice you heard, not a woman's.

A moment later, Prudence had flung the door open.

"Hazel!" she screamed. "Hazel! Hazel!"

But Hazel could not hear her, for she was dead. She lay strangled on her bed, a scarf round her throat. The scarf belonged to Mr. Vinnery who was also in the room, sitting bent forward in a chair some feet from Hazel's bed.

"Hazel! Hazel!" the two ladies whimpered, untying the scarf, chafing the bruised throat, the cold hands. "Hazel! Hazel!" But it was useless.

Then they turned to Mr. Vinnery. The tears were rolling down his cheeks in a thick stream. His eyes were completely aware, completely sane, though a grief so monstrous sat in them, that even in that moment of desolation and fury, the two ladies were forced to turn their eyes away.

"Miss Prudence! Miss Joan!" He addressed them each in turn, though he did not look at them. The eyes stared straight before him. "What have I done? I thought it was *her*, Grace. And it isn't. It's Miss Hazel, poor, dear, sweet Miss Hazel!"

There was a moment's silence, then: "Oh, Lord God, who redeemed all men else, have no pity on me!" he cried in a loud voice; and his head fell on his chest, and he sat there motionless, except for the hands opening and shutting and opening again, like the wings of some great moth already half dead.

WRITE TO JOHN BULL ABOUT IT

Demob Benefits

WHAT BENEFITS DO present-day Army conscripts receive when they are demobilized, as compared with those who served during the war? A reader writes:

"When my nephew was demobilized from the Army in 1946 he received fifty-six days' leave with an additional day for every month served overseas. He was given a civilian outfit and ninety clothing coupons and has since had another twenty-six coupons. Will my son, who was called up last July, get the same benefits?"

These benefits were devised for men who had served for long periods. They do not apply to men called up in 1947 and 1948 for a fixed period.

On release, such men will get one day's paid leave for each month of service and a supplementary allowance of sixty clothing coupons. They will not receive a cash allowance for the purchase of clothing. However, they will be allowed to retain some articles of Service clothing with the option of buying a suit of battledress.

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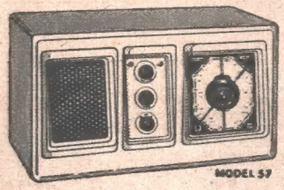

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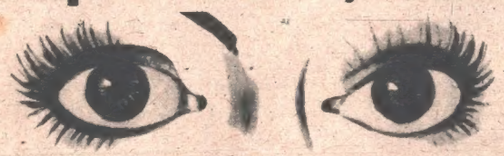

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